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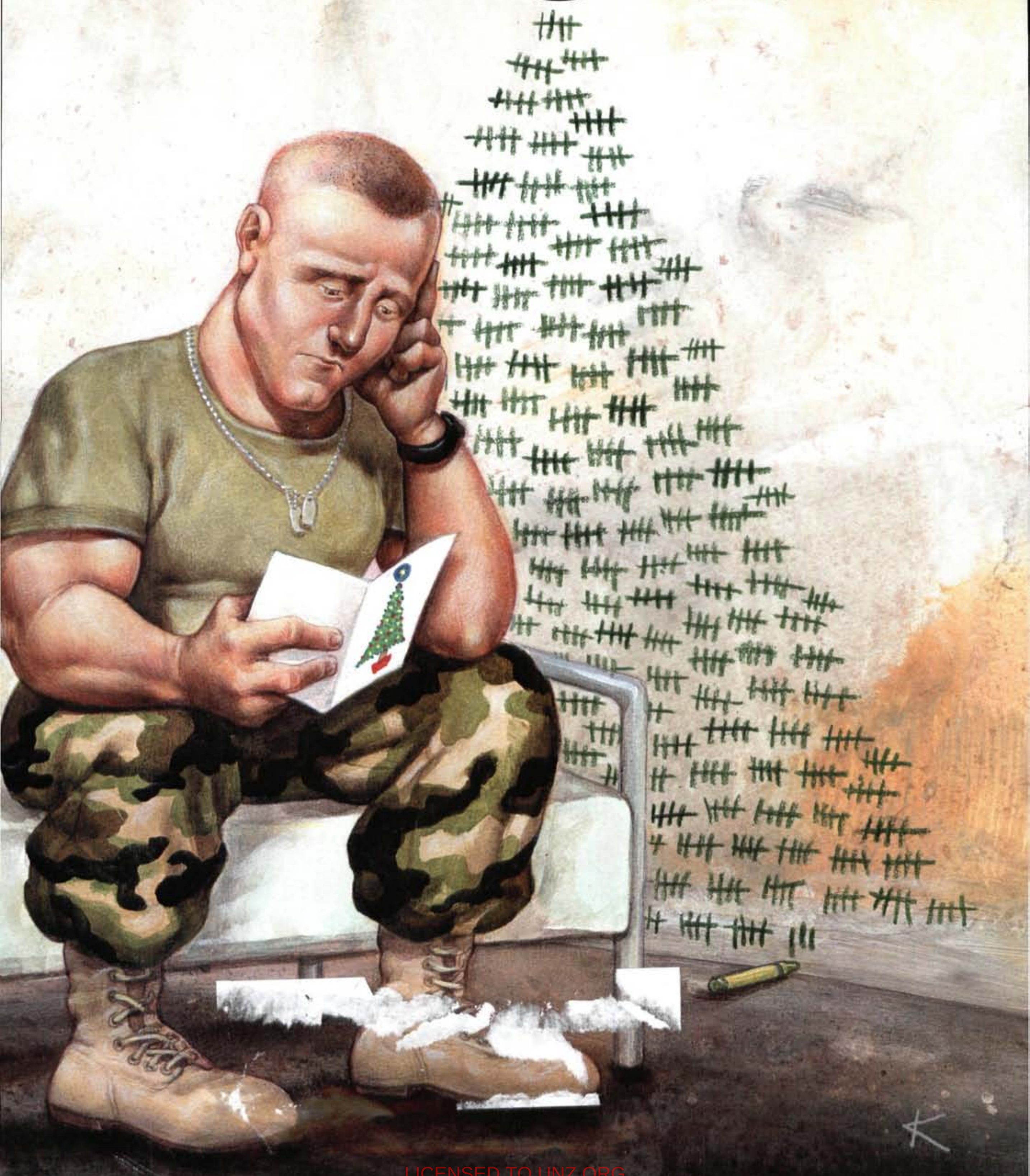
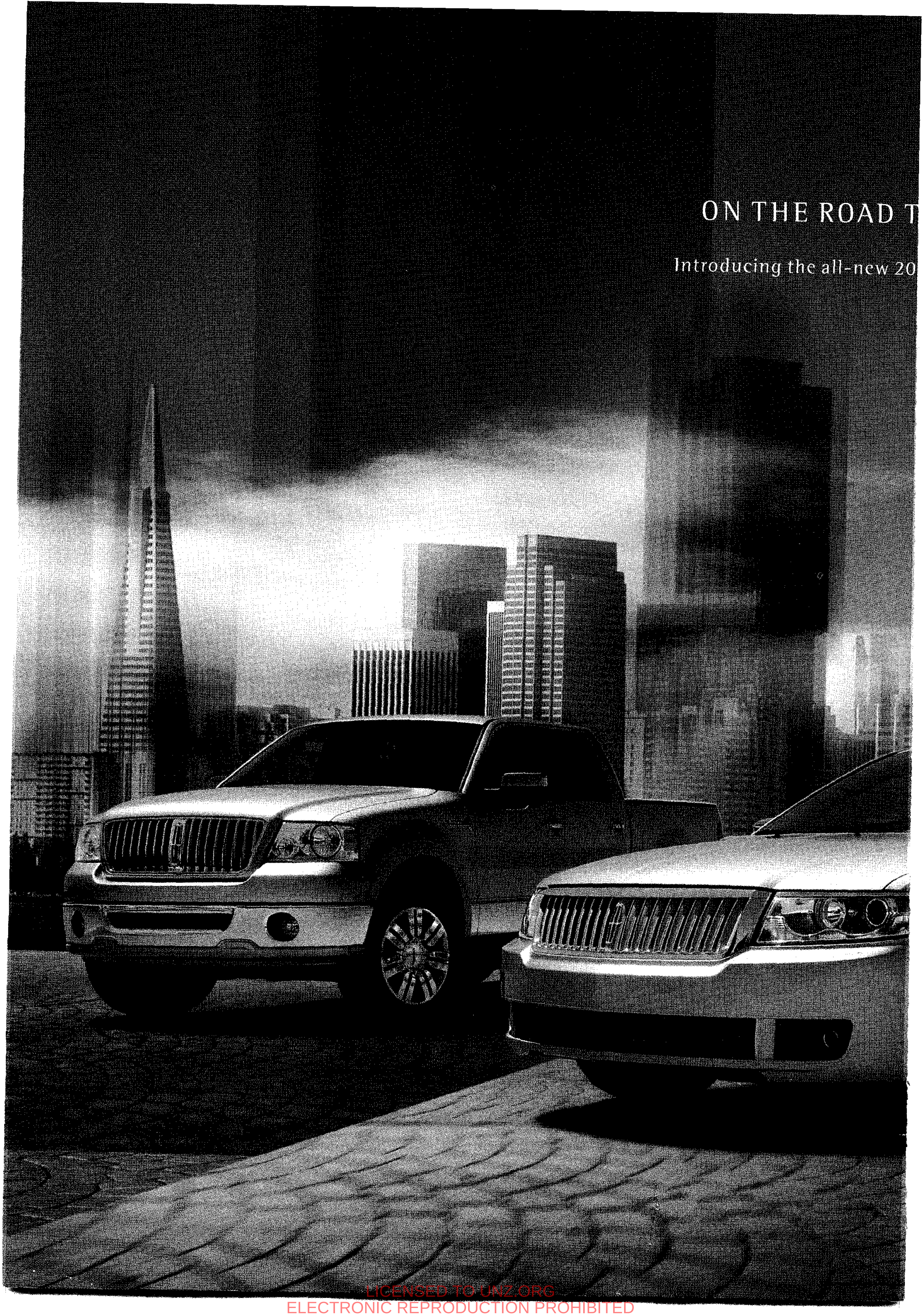
THE NEW YORKER

DEC. 19, 2005

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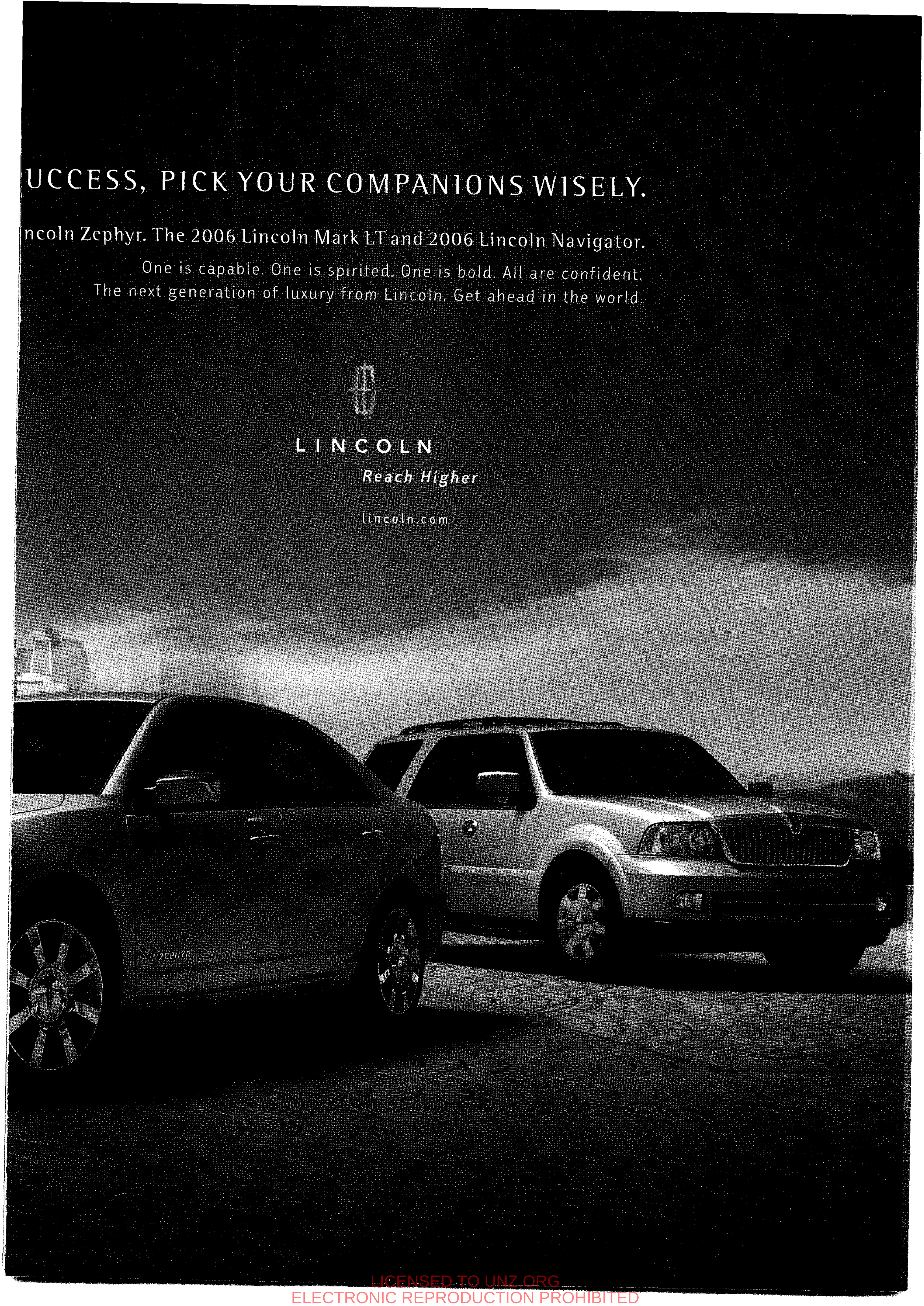

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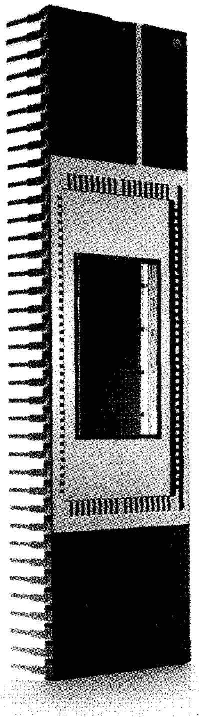

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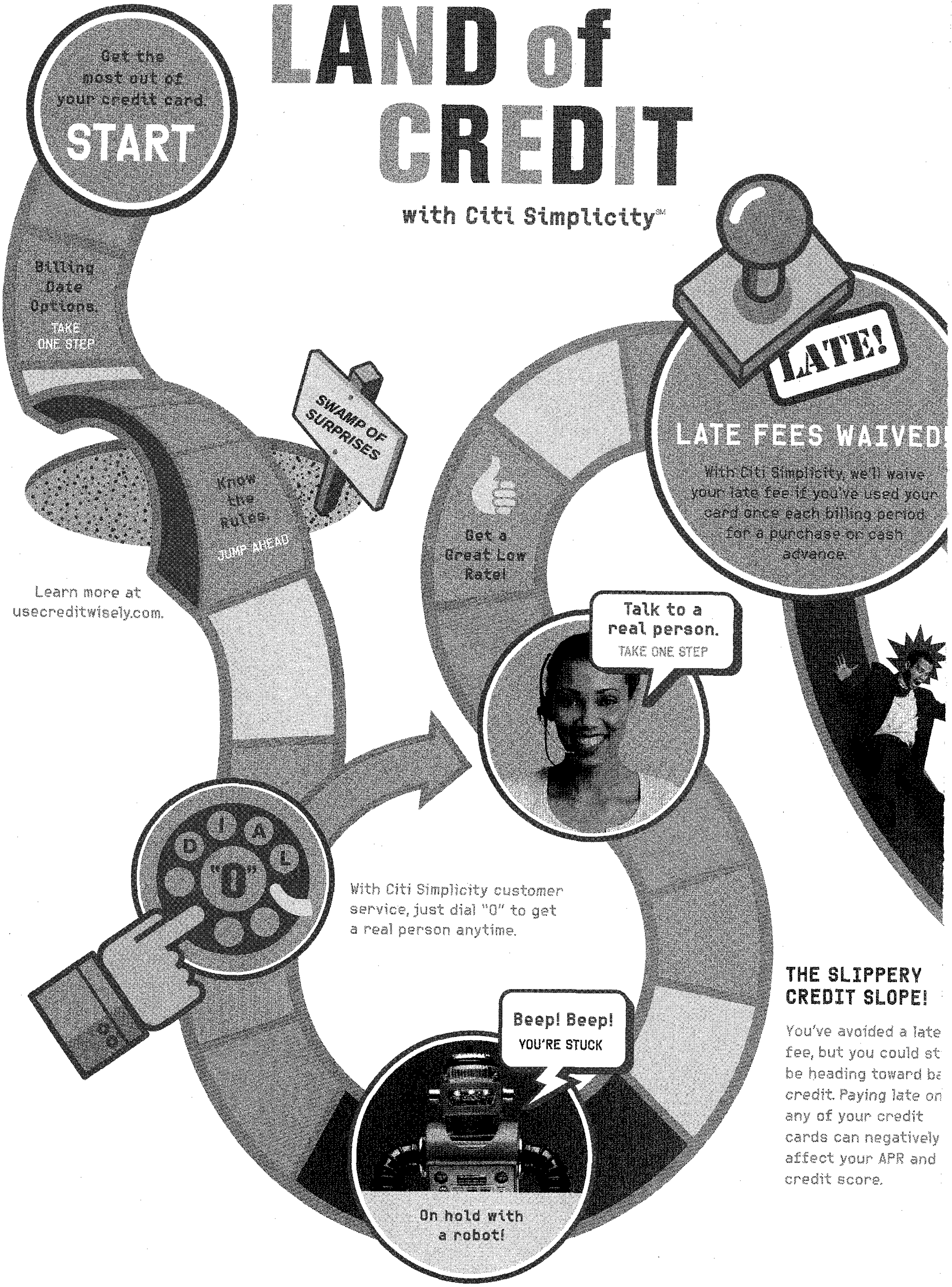
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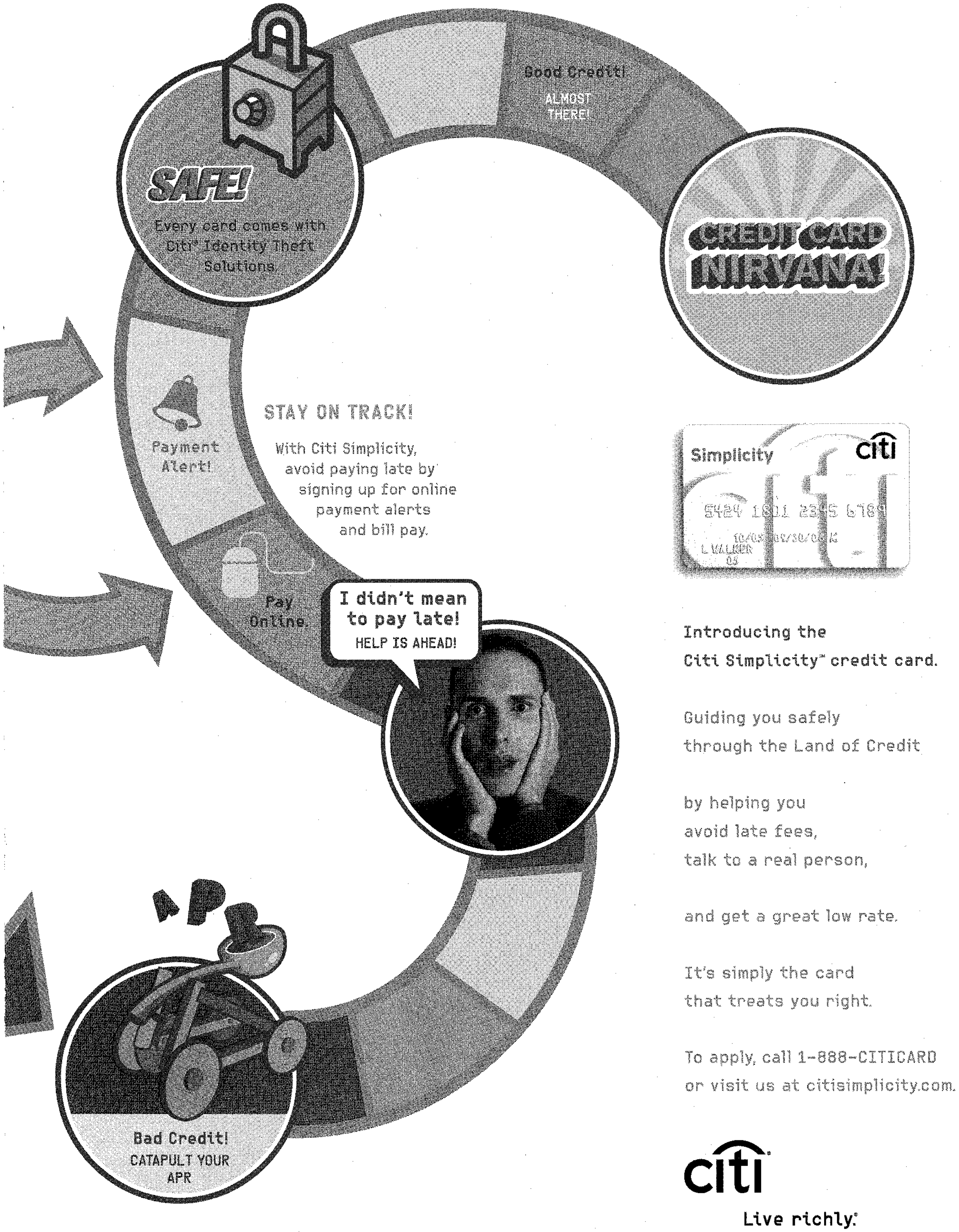
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–*The Independent*, UK

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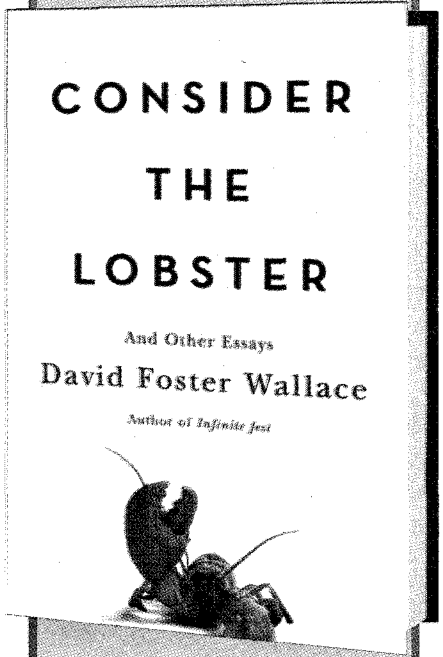

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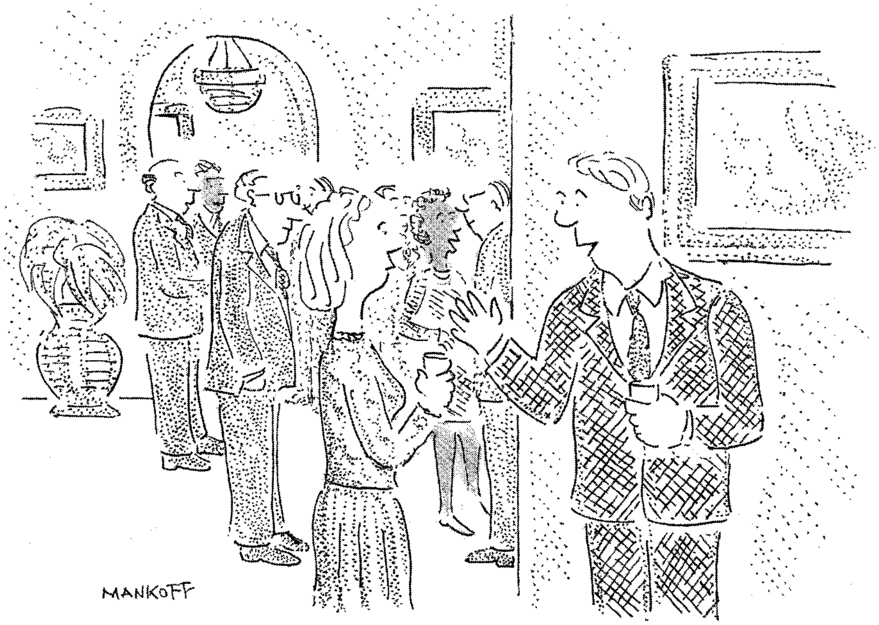
David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 101) is a film critic for the magazine and the author of "American Sucker." ♦



"I'm an optimist. I have every confidence that global warming will be nullified by nuclear winter."

THE MAIL

CASEY'S CHOICE

Peter Boyer's article on the ascension of the pro-life Pennsylvania senatorial candidate Robert Casey, Jr., brings to mind an interesting historical parallel ("The Right to Choose," November 14th). During the New Deal era, the Democratic Party's uneasy coalition of liberal Northerners and conservative Southerners required some of the liberals' core values to be pushed aside. For example, Franklin D. Roosevelt consistently refused to support federal anti-lynching legislation, for fear that, as he explained to Walter White, of the N.A.A.C.P., doing so would jeopardize the allegiance of the Southern Congressional Democrats. The current Democratic Party cannot hope to recapture Congress without effecting similar, perhaps unwelcome, compromises.
Seth Levi
Philadelphia, Pa.

Boyer's thought-provoking article on the Democrats' efforts to reach out to opponents of abortion rights omits two points that might have put the issue in better historical context. In 2000, the Democrats in Pennsylvania nominated a pro-life candidate, Ron Klink, then a U.S. representative, to run against Senator Rick Santorum. Klink received forty-six per cent of the vote, while the Democratic Presidential nominee, Al Gore, carried the state. Further, although there may be strong anti-abortion sentiment in Pennsylvania, the last four Presidential elections were won by the Democratic nominee (each one solidly pro-choice). While Casey's position on abortion may take that issue off the table, it hardly guarantees his victory in 2006.
Claude R. Marx
Salem, Mass.

In his astute analysis of how abortion politics are affecting the Democratic Party, Boyer reports that the 1989 Pennsylvania Abortion Control Act bans "partial birth abortion," but that term did not enter the lexicon until 1995. Rather, the law forbids abortions twenty-four weeks after conception (unless the woman's life is threatened); banning "partial birth abortion" may, in fact, prohibit abortions as early as twelve weeks. Boyer also reports that Pennsylvania law requires notification of a minor's parents before an abortion. Actually, the law requires the consent of either parent and takes the decision out of the minor's hands entirely unless she resorts to a court proceeding known as judicial bypass.
Carol Petraitis
Director, Clara Bell Duvall
Reproductive Freedom Project
American Civil Liberties Union of
Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pa.

TEXTBOOK ECONOMICS

As the president of a nonprofit group that delivers most of the American textbooks acquired by China's universities, I read James Surowiecki's column on the economics of textbook publishing with great interest (The Financial Page, November 7th). The price of a book on Western medicine can be equal to the monthly salary of a professor in Beijing. None of China's roughly one hundred and fifty medical schools have an adequately comprehensive library, and everyone suffers—faculty, students, health-care workers, and patients. Until knowledge is treated as a public good rather than as a commodity, or access to it becomes affordable, if not free, students and teachers wherever they live will be captives of the knowledge industry, even as some sustain it by producing the research that publishers sell back to them.
Jeff Smith
President, Bridge to Asia Foundation
San Francisco, Calif.

•

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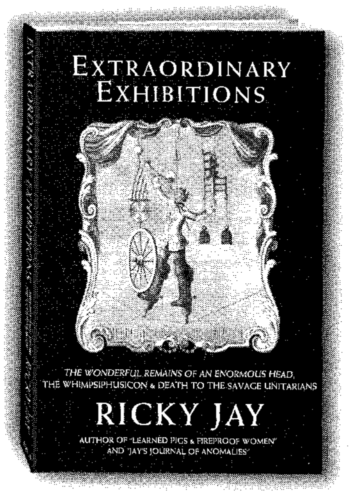
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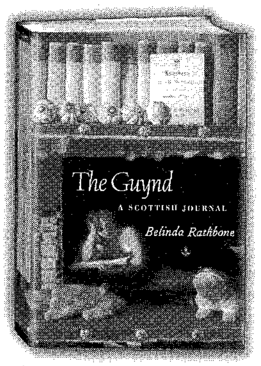
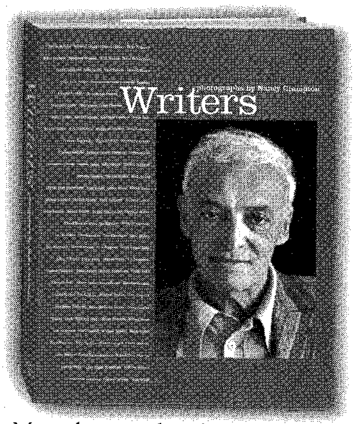


Belinda Rathbone shares hard-won lessons in this captivating memoir of her marriage to a Scottish laird and to his 400-acre ancestral home.



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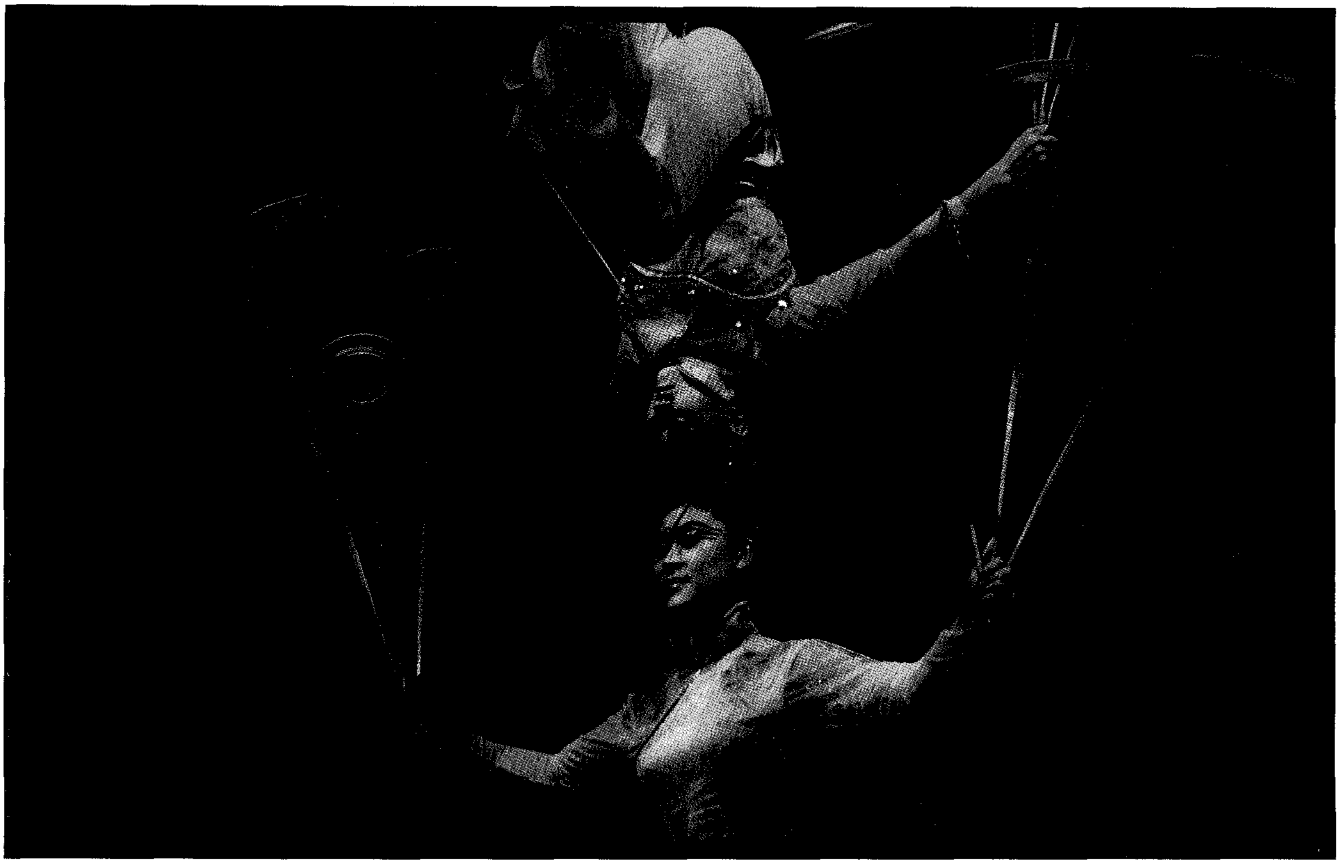

Golden Dragon Acrobats, at the New Victory Theatre. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
18	19	20	14	15	16	17

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
LONG LIVE THE KING

The formidable British actor Simon Russell Beale, who has been described, perhaps unfairly, as resembling Gertrude Stein, will replace Tim Curry in the role of King Arthur in "Monty Python's Spamalot" on Dec. 20. Beale was nominated for a Tony for his Broadway début, in Tom Stoppard's "Jumpers" last year, and also appeared as Uncle Vanya in Donmar Warehouse's production of the Chekhov classic and in "Twelfth Night," both at BAM. (See page 14.)

NIGHT LIFE
ALL-AMERICAN

The local group Las Rubias del Norte, led by the singers Emily Hurst and Allyssa Lamb, can often be found in the back room of the Brooklyn club Barbès, performing its elegant, finely wrought Latin-influenced songs. The group travels to Joe's Pub to celebrate the release of its second album, "Panamericana." (See page 14.)

ART
MESSINA'S MADONNA

Little is known of the Sicilian painter Antonello da Messina (ca. 1430-79), but his influence is widely felt in the work of Bellini and others. The Met's small Antonello exhibition includes a recently rediscovered Madonna and Child, which may be the artist's earliest surviving work. (See page 15.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
ROCKY TWO

Dicapo Opera offers a rare chance to hear two of Rachmaninoff's major vocal works, "The Bells," a cantata setting of Poe, and the one-act opera "Francesca da Rimini," featuring soloists from the Bolshoi Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera. (See page 20.)

MOVIES
FOURPLAY

To conclude its tribute to the actor Tony Leung, BAM offers a quartet of films directed by Wong Kar-wai. Saturday's triple feature includes "Days of Being Wild," "In the Mood for Love," and "2046," released this year. Sunday's capper is "Happy Together," from 1997, which moves from a Buenos Aires tenement to the rarefied landscape of Patagonia and ends in the neon rush of Taipei. (See page 27.)

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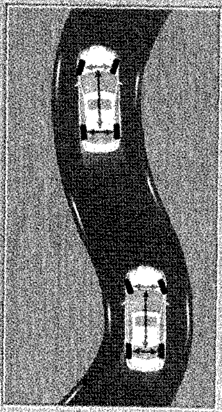

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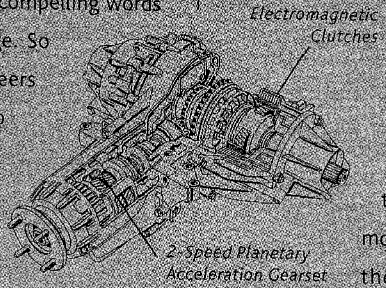

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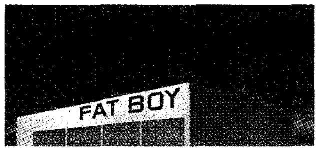
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
RISE AND FALL

Ed Ruscha would have to be America's Artist Laureate, were there one. His incalculably witty "Course of Empire," which excited visitors at last summer's Venice Biennale and is now at the Whitney, proves it: five large "Blue Collar" paintings, from 1992, which depict generic industrial structures that Ruscha calls "blocks with words," in black-and-white, matched with new versions, in color, that imagine the buildings' fates little more than a decade later. "Tech-Chem" has become "Fat Boy," "Tires" is now nameless and being expanded, "Tool & Die" bears fresh faux-Oriental lettering (and regular graffiti), "Trade School" has been boarded up, and "Telephone Booth" is gone. Skies variously balmy or apocalyptic evoke a cosmic order unaffected by teetering economic indicators. The suite's allusion to Thomas Cole's 1833-36 "The Course of Empire," reinforced at the show by light-box reproductions of the grand old rise-and-fall allegory, hardly exhausts its poetic charge, as a visual epic about progress gone sour or merely strange. The rise of what? Whose fall? The paintings are wonderfully installed on walls that converge slightly, in forced perspective that suggests passage into an uncomfortably narrowing future.



ED RUSCHA, "THE OLD TECH-CHEM BUILDING" (2003)

—*Peter Schjeldahl*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ALMOST, MAINE
A romantic comedy set in a remote northern town, by John Cariani. Directed by Gabriel Barre. Previews begin Dec. 15. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

BEAUTY OF THE FATHER
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the New York première of a play by Nilo Cruz ("Anna in the Tropics"), about a woman who travels to Spain to reconnect with her father. Michael Greif ("Rent") directs. Previews begin Dec. 15. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

CANDIDA
The Jean Cocteau Repertory's season of "five classic women" continues with George Bernard Shaw's 1904 sendup of the institution of marriage. Previews begin Dec. 16. (Bouwerie Lane, 330 Bowery. 212-279-4200.)

DOG SEES GOD: CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE BLOCKHEAD
Eddie Kaye Thomas, Eliza Dushku, America Ferrera, and Ian Somerhalder star in this tale about an adult cartoon character whose world is populated by a motley crew of comic-strip personalities. Directed by Trip Cullman. In previews. Opens Dec. 15. (Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED
A new comedy by Douglas Carter Beane, about a closeted gay Hollywood star. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION
George Bernard Shaw's play, about a young woman who learns that her mother's wealth is derived from a less than respectable métier, stars Dana Ivey. Directed by Charlotte Moore. In previews. Opens Dec. 18. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

THIS WAY THAT WAY
A comic duo on the run dream of bringing their act to the New York stage, in this action-adventure musical directed by Mark Lonergan. Previews begin Dec. 14. Opens Dec. 18. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE TRACHTENBURG FAMILY SLIDESHOW PLAYERS . . . ON ICE!
Jason Trachtenburg, his fashion-designer spouse, Tina Piña, and their eleven-year-old daughter, Rachel (drummer, vocalist, and raconteur), perform their music-filled variety show. Dec. 18 and Dec. 20-23. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

ABIGAIL'S PARTY
In the New Group's New York première of Mike Leigh's 1977 comedy, Jennifer Jason Leigh makes a fiendishly good turn as Beverly, the self-appointed It Girl of the London suburbs and, as her unfortunate party guests discover, an excruciating shrew whose beguilements are the frilly instruments of doom. In fact, everyone who enters Beverly's presence—including her beleaguered husband (the excellent Max Baker) and an assortment of unwitting neighbors—appears to be long suffering. As the group loses its collective good sense to gin, Beverly's soirée goes thoroughly south and the comedy grows blacker. By then, the play is nearly drunk on its own caustic abandon, but, in the able hands of the director, Scott Elliott ("Hurlyburly"), it offers an uneasy portrait of middle-class implosion. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

APPARITION
Five ghost stories written by Anne Washburn are performed by an ensemble cast that includes T. Ryder Smith. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

BUSH IS BAD
There's plenty of unabashed liberal venting but precious few laughs in Joshua Rosenblum's cabaret spoof, which aims to palliate the "blue-state blues" by lampooning every available stripe of Republican hypocrisy. Aside from Jill Abramovitz's madcap portrayal of Ann Coulter, whom she plays as a shrieking, malevolent harpy, much of the show seems stale, its targets either dated (Katherine Harris) or overplayed (W.'s mangled grammar). (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-352-3101.)

CELEBRATION / THE ROOM
Neil Pepe directs two plays by the Nobel laureate Harold Pinter. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

CHITA RIVERA: THE DANCER'S LIFE
Rivera, supported by a cast of ten, stars in a musical about her life and career, touching on shows by Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, and Bob Fosse. With a book by Terrence McNally. Directed and choreographed by Graciela Daniele. (Shoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

A CHRISTMAS CAROL
Theatreworks's musical based on the Dickens classic. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

THE COLOR PURPLE
Overamplified, overheated, and overhyped, this noisy musical was adapted from Alice Walker's 1982 novel, about an abused and stifled young woman named Celie (the compelling LaChanze), who has been systematically stripped of her identity. Jon Lee Beatty has designed some gorgeous backdrops and Donald Byrd's choreography has its dashing moments, yet, under Gary Griffin's direction, the show moves quickly but picks up no momentum. It seems that the production team hasn't thought deeply enough about what lies underneath the characters' story, and there's something inert at its core. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/12/05.) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

HIS ROYAL HIPNESS LORD BUCKLEY IN THE ZAM ZAM ROOM
A hot-jazz trio backs the entrancing Jake Broder as he bops through the nineteen-fifties cult lounge performer Lord Buckley's resurrected spoken-word riffs on the Swinging Pied Piper, Jesus of Nazareth ("The Nazz"), and the Gettysburg Address. Broder gives Buckley none of the standup comic's yearning to be liked; he works the room not for laughs but for moments of mind-expanding exhilaration. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

IN THE CONTINUUM
The fiery young performers Danai Gurira and Nikkole Salter have moved to the Perry Street Theatre with their intelligent (and often comedic) play about the economic dependency, social stigma, and family pressure faced by black women with H.I.V. (31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

KLONSKY AND SCHWARTZ
Romulus Linney's witty, talky play is about two men who have a way with words—the doomed and gifted New York poet Delmore Schwartz (played by the excellent Bill Wise) and his younger friend Milton Klonsky (Chris Ceraso), a frustrated writer who becomes a kind of guardian angel to the disintegrating poet. Linney's text quotes liberally from Schwartz's late poems, whose words upstage the patter of the play. Directed by Jamie Richards. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 212-352-3101.)

MISS WITHERSPOON
In Christopher Durang's latest existential capriccio (directed by Emily Mann, at Playwrights Horizons), Miss Witherspoon (played by the expert Kristine Nielsen) rants at us mostly from the netherworld, where she can't seem to catch a karmic break: she is sent back to earth in various reincarnations as, among other things, a wife of Rex Harrison, a yapping dog, and the baby of redneck drug addicts. Every time she is reincarnated, she kills herself. With this kind of comic conceit, where anything can happen, but only to one character, a certain monotony is bound to set in—which Durang, who is a funny man, postpones with some goofy stage business. Giddy with apocalyptic fear and loathing, Durang's play seems an augury that the fin has come early to this siècle. (12/12/05) (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MR. MARMALADE
In Noah Haidle's exhilarating new play (well directed by Michael Greif), which is reminiscent of a 2002 article by Adam Gopnik for this magazine entitled "Bumping Into Mr. Ravioli," the title character is the

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— Bon Appetit, July 2004

...it's satiny and citrusy.

— Men's Journal, June 2004

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— Vibe, April 2004

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— U.S. News & World Report, May 3, 2004

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— Wine Enthusiast, Dec. 31, 2004

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— Simply the Best, November/December 2004

Thick and ripe, it flows across the palate .. a hauntingly delicious finish.

— Robb Report, June 2004

[illegible]

imaginary friend of a lively but neglected four-year-old called Lucy (Mamie Gummer, making her impressive Off Broadway début). Mr. Marmalade (Michael C. Hall) is a buttoned-down, briefcase-toting simulacrum, one suspects, of Lucy's absent father. Although grownups occasionally intrude on Lucy's busy world—she's the only child of a divorced mother in suburban New Jersey—the events of the play mainly concern the games with which she peoples her solitude, and Lucy's pretensions to adulthood are alternately hilarious and heartbreaking. (12/5/05) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE OTHER SIDE
Manhattan Theatre Club presents Ariel Dorfman's story about a couple living on the border of two war-ravaged countries as they await the return of their son, who ran away thirty years earlier. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE RAT PACK IS BACK!
Frank's forty-sixth birthday is an occasion for several rounds of Martinis in David Cassidy and Don Reo's musical. Cassidy also directs and stars as the Rat Pack pal Bobby Darin. With music by the Supper Club Big Band. (Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

ROPE
Patrick Hamilton's brilliantly structured 1929 thriller about a Leopold-and-Loeb-like murder still tingles with well-earned suspense. This Drama Dept. production unwisely outs the homosexual spoiled-boy murderers, depriving the actors of all that charged subtext, but, even so, this is taut drama. David Warren's shrewd direction uncovers the play's handsome symmetries, and Zak Orth's mesmerizing turn as the supercilious prig Rupert Cadell lays bare the vain, melancholy soul of a reluctant humanist. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

SEASCAPE
Edward Albee's nostalgic Pulitzer Prize-winning play, from 1975, about two couples who meet on a beach and contemplate life, death, and evolution, stars Frances Sternhagen and the excellent George Grizzard as the elderly couple who wax poetic about what to do with the time on their hands, and Elizabeth Marvel and Frederick Weller as the curious, innocent sea creatures they encounter. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

STRIKING 12
Ted Sperling directs this rock-musical-comedy rendition of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl." With a book by Rachel Sheinkin. (Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

SWEENEY TODD
Under the bold direction and design of John Doyle, this imported British revival at the Eugene O'Neill, which shrinks the cast of thirty to ten, with actors doubling as musicians, is almost unbearably exciting. Michael Cerveris is a terrifying Sweeney, a model of sulfurous restraint, and Patti LuPone, as his pragmatic and pathological helpmate, Mrs. Lovett, is a gargoyle of toughness. (11/14/05) (230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

TIGHT EMBRACE
Set in a nameless Latin-American country, Jorge Ignacio Cortiñas's play sets up a situation fraught with tension: a naïve guard (Andrés Munar) armed with a rifle watches over a motherly prisoner (the superbly wily Mia Katigbak), their evolving relationship the result of a kidnapping. She's learned the rules of her captors so well that she helps the young guard commit them to memory. Eventually, he recollects the only rule she's omitted: "If the prisoner sees my face, kill the prisoner." From these promising beginnings, Cortiñas's eloquent playwriting somehow squanders its taut pacing, lingering where it needs to be quick and merciless. Lisa Peterson directs. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

A TOUCH OF THE POET
A Roundabout Theatre production of the Eugene O'Neill play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL
Signature Theatre Company presents Horton Foote's play about a strong-willed sixty-year-old woman (Lois Smith) who escapes her stifling life in Houston and embarks on a journey to return to her girlhood home in a small Texas town. Harris Yulin directs. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TWELVE DAYS OF A NUT CRACKER CHRISTMAS CAROL
Four Christmas favorites in one, in a downtown dance-and-theatre spectacular. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101.)

THE WOMAN IN WHITE
In Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest offering, adapted by Charlotte Jones from Wilkie Collins's creepy nineteenth-century novel and directed by Trevor Nunn, it's not easy to judge the actors or the play because they're all of a piece, and the score and the lyrics (by David Zippel) are so over-the-top dramatic that it's impossible to have real feeling for any of the characters, let alone their situations. (11/28/05) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

The Central Park Christmas Bird Count (see Above and Beyond).

ANDREW BRANDOU

Also Playing

ALTAR BOYZ: Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BACH AT LEIPZIG:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through Dec. 18. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FOOLS IN LOVE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **THE GENTLEMAN DANCING-MASTER:** Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. Through Dec. 18. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE ODD COUPLE:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ON SECOND AVENUE:** J.C.C., 334 Amsterdam Ave. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **PETER PAN:** Theatre at Madison Square Garden, 4 Penn Plaza. 212-307-1000. **RFK:** The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100. **SISTER AND MISS LEXIE:** Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. Through Dec. 18. **SOUVENIR:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WAITING FOR GODOT:** Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Dec. 16-17: The **Lemonheads,** one of the more promising acts to break out of Boston's alternative-rock scene in the late eighties, had an underground guitar crunch and the powerful charisma of the front man and heartthrob Evan Dando. The band released a string of well-received albums, notably the acclaimed "It's a Shame About Ray," in 1992, but Dando's drug problems took a toll on the band, and they broke up. He's since gone clean, got married, and put the group back together.

CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. (866-468-7619)—Dec. 15-17: **Paul Winter's** annual winter-solstice shows celebrate the changing of the season. This year's lineup features the Russian village singers and dancers from the **Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble** and African-American dancers and drummers from the **Forces of Nature** company, as well as the double-reed player **Paul McCandless,** who was an original member of Winter's Consort and will be joining him for the first time in twenty years.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Dec. 14: The dark heavy-metal bands **Amon Amarth, Children of Bodom,** and **Trivium** join forces to deafen ticket holders and to blaspheme. Dec. 16: **Martin Sexton** (see the New York Society for Ethical Culture). Dec. 17: In the late eighties, the maverick African-American guitarist Vernon Reid vaulted **Living Colour** out of CBGB's and into the segregated mainstream rock world. The group deftly laced its riff-driven anthems with funk flourishes and secured a regular MTV rotation and a high-profile slot on the first Lollapalooza tour. Subsequent albums failed to sustain the impact of the band's début release, "Vivid," and it broke up in 1995. They reunited a few years ago, released the album "CollideØscope" in 2003, and continued their groundbreaking ways.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Dec. 14: The ever-present rock producer **Mitchell Froom** stops by with material from his uncharacteristically spare album of solo-piano pieces, "A Thousand Days." With the guitarist **Val McCallum.** Dec. 18: The petite ensemble **Las Rubias del Norte** compresses Latin

big-band compositions into sparkling gems. Las Rubias features a pair of lead singers, Emily Hurst and Allyssa Lamb (neither of whom is blond, but both of whom are from North America), who are former members of the New York Choral Society. The group is here to celebrate the release of its second CD, "Panamericana," the title of which refers to the network of roads running from Alaska to Chile.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Dec. 15: The Brooklyn threesome **Blood on the Wall,** known for throbbing guitars, straight-ahead drumming, and a worry-about-it-tomorrow approach. With the guitarist **TK Webb.** Dec. 17-18: The **Slackers** deliver a holiday gift—two nights of piping-hot ska.

"LIVE FROM HOME"
The winning acoustic-music series presents **Chocolate Genius, Meshell Ndegéocello,** and **Marc Ribot.** With **Jeff Klein** and the brother-and-sister duo **Judd & Maggie.** (Housing Works Bookstore Café, 126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324. Dec. 15.)

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE
2 W. 64th St. (212-874-5210)—Dec. 14: A holiday benefit concert for the area radio station WFUV features the **Little Willies,** a local alt-country band that includes a not so little singer (Norah Jones) on piano and the soul-folk-rockers **Amos Lee** and **Martin Sexton,** among others.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Dec. 15: The **Reverend Horton Heat,** renowned for giddy rockabilly fare like "Eat Steak," "Baby, I'm Drunk," and "Bales of Cocaine," returns to New York with a new album of Christmas favorites, "We Three Kings." The irreverent reverend may be immersed in the spirit of the season, but he hasn't lost his manic guitar twang.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Dec. 15: The crazed jazz experimentalist **John Zorn** pits his alto sax against the lauded No Wave pioneer **Arto Lindsay's** skronking guitar. **Anton Fier,** a seasoned veteran of the Feelies, Pere Ubu, the Lounge Lizards, and his own band, the Golden Palominos, handles the percussion. Dec. 16: The ever-evolving Continental cabaret rock of **Barbez.**

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Dec. 18: New Jersey's **Senses Fail** plays a strain of punk-pop called screamo, a cross between the breakneck energy of hardcore and the soul-bearing tendencies of emo. **Saves the Day,** also from the Garden State, covers similar terrain, but it does it with much more appealing power-pop style.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—The cabaret mainstay **Andrea Marcovicci** doesn't have the strongest voice in the business, but she consistently delivers witty repartee and engaging historical patter, and her material is always first rate. Through the end of the year, she's performing love songs from the Second World War era; in January, she returns with a three-week program devoted to Fred Astaire.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Dec. 15: The Brooklyn-born guitarist and balladeer **Matt Munisteri** explores the lost songs of Willard Robison (the nineteen-twenties composer known for " 'Taint So, Honey, 'Taint So," "A Cottage for Sale," and "Don't Smoke in Bed," which was covered by both Nina Simone and Peggy Lee). He's joined by **Jon-Erik Kellso,** on trumpet, the pianist **Matt Ray,** and the downtown bassist **Greg Cohen,** a longtime collaborator with Tom Waits and David Byrne who also plays with Ornette Coleman and John Zorn's Masada.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Dec. 13-18: The saxophonist **Joshua Redman** delves into the funky side of things with his Elastic Band. Here it includes the keyboardist **Sam Yahel,** the guitarist **Mike Moreno,** and the drummer **Jeff Ballard.**

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Dec. 31, the vocalist **Steve Tyrell.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Dec. 15: The Broadway standout **Rebecca Luker,** a Tony nominee in 2000 for her role in "The Music Man," pays tribute to female songwriters old and new. Dec. 16-31: The high-spirited entertainer **Michael Feinstein** is a true mensch. He delivers his annual holiday program with ecumenical even-handedness.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Dec. 14-18: **Cecil Taylor's** Aha. Although the perennially avant-garde pianist can generate the power of a big band even when he plays solo, Taylor occasionally likes to surround himself with a phalanx of horns and percussion, as he will with his new ensemble, which features the legendary British drummer **Tony Oxley.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Wynton Marsalis brings a little New Orleans spice to the holiday season, with the help of **Ellis Marsalis, Wycliffe Gordon, Don Vappie, Joe Temperley,** and others. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Dec. 15-18.)

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—An ambitious series of piano duets provides a chance to hear some of today's most noteworthy jazz keyboardists in an intimate setting. Dec. 14: **George Cables** and **Danny Grissett.** Dec. 15: **Jason Moran** and **Orrin Evans.** Dec. 16: **Vijay Iyer** and **Amina Claudine Myers.** Dec. 17: **Kenny Barron** and **Gerald Clayton.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Dec. 14-18: The vocalist **Kevin Mahogany** pays tribute to the immortal blues crooner Joe Williams, accompanied by a topnotch band that includes the pianist **Benny Green** and the bassist **Ray Drummond.**

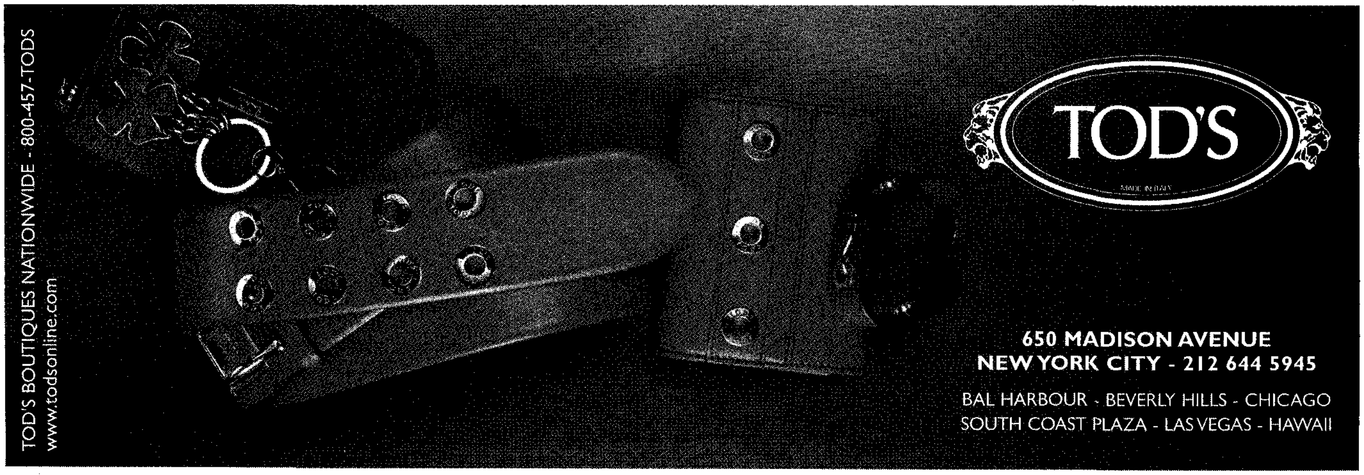
SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Dec. 15: Just last week, **Joe Lovano** was blowing in front of an eleven-piece band up the block at the Village Vanguard. Here, the daring and restless saxophonist pairs off with the funky drummer **Idris Muhammad.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Take the pianist, composer, and arranger **Cedar Walton** for granted at your own risk. Few jazz musicians understand the byways of small-group dynamics quite as well as this deft stylist, a paragon of swing since his days as a Jazz Messenger with Art Blakey in the early sixties. The trumpeter **Roy Hargrove,** a live-wire soloist, joins his trio here Dec. 13-18. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Dec. 14: The **Ron Carter** trio is obsessed with sterling arrangements, controlled dynamics, and group interplay in a chamber-jazz setting. The trio, which also includes the guitarist **Russell Malone** and the pianist **Mulgrew Miller,** fills the gap left by the Modern Jazz Quartet.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—The small but notable exhibition **"Antonello da Messina: Sicily's Renaissance Master"** goes on view this week in the European painting galleries and includes the masterful, enigmatic "Virgin Annunciate." Opens Dec. 13. ♦ The devotional paintings in **"Fra Angelico"** are lit up with heavenly blues, blood reds, and pure golds. Rewarding long contemplation, they can feel like love letters, passed down through the centuries from the fifteenth-century Tuscan artist. Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Clouet to Seurat: French Drawings from the British Museum."** Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437."** Through Jan. 3. ♦ The pre-Photoshop images in **"The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult"** were purported to depict ghosts, spirit writing, ectoplasm, and the like. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"David Milne Watercolors: 'Painting Toward the Light.' "** A subset of a larger show organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario, these forty-five watercolor depictions of New York State scenes provide a rare chance to see the work of the Canadian artist (1882-1953) outside his home country. Through Jan. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)



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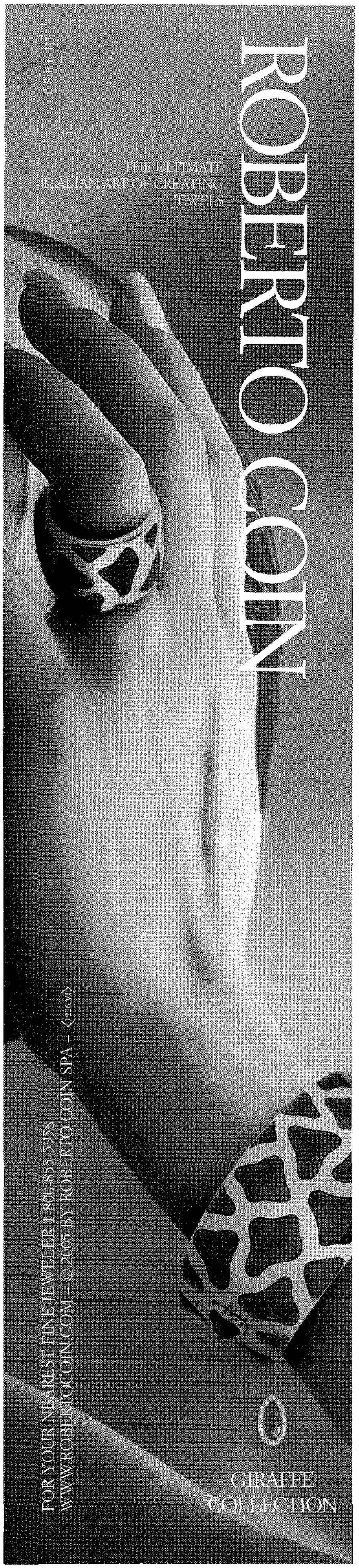
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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon"** spans the French symbolist's work from nightmarish charcoal drawings to jewel-toned oils and pastels. Through Jan. 23. ♦ The retrospective exhibition **"Elizabeth Murray"** includes many of the shaped and splintered canvases covered with energizing color combinations for which the artist is best known. In the second-floor galleries, a selection of Murray's prints adapt similar techniques to paper. Through Jan. 9. ♦ The fever pitch of post-9/11 anxiety is simultaneously stoked and suppressed in **"SAFE: Design Takes on Risk,"** an exhibition of objects designed to ward off, stanch, or manage disaster. Through Jan. 2. ♦ **"Pixar."** The company that brought us "Toy Story" and "The Incredibles" is honored with an exhibition of more than five hundred paintings, sketches, sculptures, models, and digital installations, as well as a program of every animated film made by Pixar in its twenty-year history. Opens Dec. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The sprawling exhibition **"Russia!"** includes most everything you might think could fit under that rubric: gilt religious icons dating from the Middle Ages, Renaissance-era Western European paintings from imperial collections, romanticized portraits of peasant life, socialist-realist propaganda, early modernist masterworks from the collections of industrialists, videos made just this year. Through Jan. 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"The Art of Richard Tuttle."** Through Feb. 5. ♦ Ed Ruscha's **"Course of Empire."** Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Raymond Pettibon."** Thirty-seven drawings and an animated film. Through Feb. 19. ♦ The retrospective **"Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color"** reveals a painter (1867-1938) who melded Old World influences with an architect's training and eye—updated later by the lessons of the Fauves, Die Brücke, and artists like Franz Marc—to produce images of buildings and landscapes broken into bright structural shards, like segments of stained glass. Through Feb. 12. ♦ **"Still Life: A Vital Theme."** Through Jan. 15. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a re-creation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of the types of tortoises, frogs, and iguanas that he encountered in his travels to the Galápagos Islands. Through May 29. ♦ **"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries,"** a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs, provides insight into how the animals moved through their world. Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is back for an eighth year. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Some one hundred paintings by the Netherlandish artist Hans Memling (ca. 1435-94) survive; of the thirty portraits, twenty are at the Frick for the exhibition **"Memling's Portraits."** Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5. For the duration of the Memling show, the special-exhibition galleries will stay open until 8 on Fridays.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Egon Schiele,"** an exhibition of more than a hundred and fifty paintings and drawings by the Austrian artist, who died in 1918, at the age of twenty-eight. Through Feb. 20. (Open Saturdays through Mondays, and Thursdays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Frequency,"** a selection of work by black emerging artists active in the U.S. Through March 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

HELEN LEVITT
One of the great New York photographers, Levitt is also one of the rare artists whose work is

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TABLES FOR TWO
COOKSHOP

156 Tenth Ave., at 20th St. (212-924-4440)—Cookshop has a credo of socially responsible dining (a chalkboard prominently lists a rotating cast of "Our Favorite Farmers," all regional suppliers and adherents of sustainable farming), but it isn't so meticulous about creating a comfortable environment for the diners. As at Five Points, the popular NoHo restaurant that the chef Marc Meyer, his wife, Vicki Freeman, and their partner, Chris Paraskevaides, also own, the vestibule at this far-west Chelsea spot quickly fills up with a jostling, crankily hungry crowd. The dining room itself looks spacious, with high ceilings and large plate-glass windows, but the tables are tightly crammed together—pity the fleet of servers, who must negotiate not only tables, elbows, and bags but also each other. One recent evening, a request to omit an ingredient was met with a sigh. "The chef gets frustrated because he feels it compromises the dish," the waiter explained. "But he'll do it."

These less than welcoming moments are forgivable, though, given the often terrific food they accompany. Each taste can become a game of "What's that flavor?" as equal measures of sweet and spice grapple for attention. The bread basket arrives with a generous crock of crème fraîche, blended with horseradish and caramelized onions; the excellent duck *taquitos*, tiny tubes of shredded fowl surrounded by a crunchy, fresh corn tortilla, have a faint chile heat and the warm glow of cardamom. But even the more straightforward preparations have a dense complexity. A bluefish appetizer is arranged with the almost overripe lushness of a Flemish still-life; the smoked fish is nicely offset by arugula and grapes. The roasted baby chicken is tender and juicy, and the grilled pork loin and link are both traditional (with an accompaniment of braised cabbage) and surprising (with the topping of a smoked-pear mustard).

Although the entrées are enormous—nearly the size of two main courses at other restaurants—it'd be a shame to miss dessert, especially the flaky pastry turnovers encasing a rum-spiked date filling or the airy bread pudding. These would be pleasant to linger over, with a coffee or one of the unusual teas, were it not for the feeling that Cookshop has another type of turnover in mind. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $18-$36.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

as entertaining as it is affecting. This show of her color photos, mounted to coincide with the publication of a book called "Slide Show," is alternately heartbreaking and hilarious, sometimes within the same frame. Levitt is alert to the impromptu drama of the street, whether it involves three strutting roosters and a bevy of plastic-covered chairs or five children swirling around a cart full of laundry. Her stage is far from elegant: a tenement window, a busy intersection, a graffiti-covered stoop, a parked car. But the action—often no more than a gesture or a stance—is riveting and memorable. Through Dec. 23. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

RICHARD POUSETTE-DART

These canvases from the sixties and seventies transfer Seurat's Pointillism to the abstract field. The dots are enlarged into pricks of impasto, expressed straight from the tube. As with many types of formalist painting, a great range exists within this reductive sphere. "Emergence," with its dabs of vegetal green and blue and yellow, looks like Monet deconstructed, or viewed through a rainy veil. "Presence Number 6" is a saturated lavender field marked with nips of contrasting color, and "Within the Moon" is pocked with craters of paint. This is Op art with a modernist pedigree; while Pousette-Dart's work was clearly not of the psychedelic persuasion, looking at these paintings is a richly perceptual experience. Through Jan. 7. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550.)

DOUG & MIKE STARN

Because the Starn twins have always emphasized the ephemeral physicality of the photograph, their work doesn't depend on a single image but on a layered buildup of many images, suggesting the fragile, fragmented nature of the material world: things fall apart. The three strongest pieces in this small, largely retrospective show incorporate photos of Gothic Crucifixion and Assumption paintings in sculptural assemblages that recall Rauschenberg at his most protean. The construction of the work—which includes heavy-duty clamps, steel supports, pushpins, wood blocks, and prints on transparent film—dispenses with the traditional frame in order to fully engage the viewer in the process of creation, disintegration, and transformation. Through Dec. 21. (Castelli, 18 E. 77th St. 212-249-4470.)

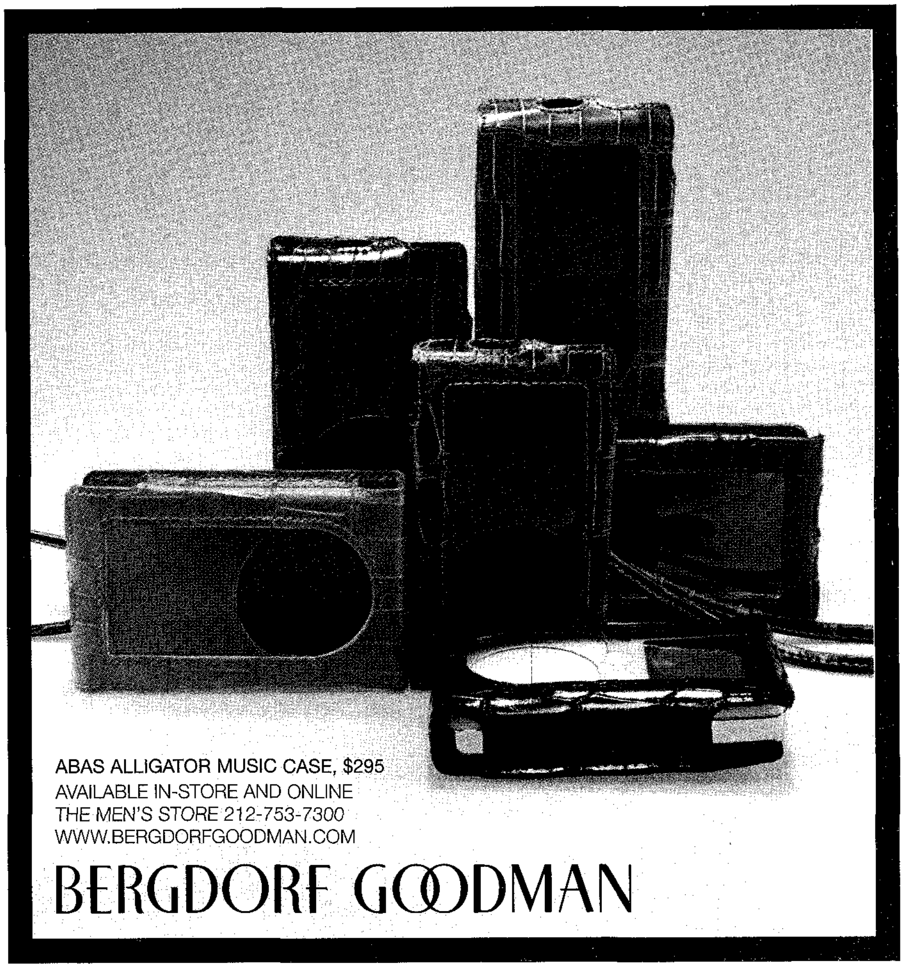
Short List

CHARLES BURCHFIELD: DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-247-2111. Through Dec. 23. **ALBERTO GIACOMETTI:** PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through Dec. 17. **JOHN GRAHAM:** Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997. Through Dec. 22. **PHILIP GUSTON:** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-688-5951. Through Dec. 17. **SAUL LEITER:** Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through Jan. 21. **BARRY LE VA:** Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-752-2929. Through Dec. 17. **SOPHIE MATISSE:** Naumann, 22 E. 80th St. 212-472-6800. Through Dec. 30. **GERHARD RICHTER:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Jan. 14. **COLLIER SCHORR:** Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067. Through Dec. 17. **CY TWOMBLY:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through Dec. 24. **"TIFFANY/POLLOCK" / BEREND STRIK:** Jack Tilton, 8 E. 76th St. 212-737-2221. Through Dec. 23.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ROE ETHRIDGE

Ethridge, a photographer known for his polished, affectless style, has a casually encyclopedic approach to the world. Everything seems to interest him, but never so much that he can't immediately move on to something else. In his new exhibition of variously scaled color work, there are pictures of a copper-colored hedge, a fir branch, a snowy landscape, a round melon on a kitchen counter, and a man speaking. Absent an apparent theme, the work doesn't have a cumulative impact, but every image counts. Ethridge, who understands the power of inconsequential things, knows when to just let it be. Through Dec. 22. (Kreps, 558 W. 21st St. 212-741-8849.)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BOB GRAMSMA
Two hundred white-framed windows and doors salvaged from a house in Zurich are assembled into a structure that bridges the gap between sculpture and architecture. As in much of Gramsma's work, nods to modernism—Mondrian and his mutating grids, Malevich's Suprematist monochromes—prevail. (The work also makes reference to the nineteenth-century economist Frédéric Bastiat's "Broken Window" parable.) Tiny, quirky pieces occupy the walls: a trio of blobby frames made from coffee grounds and glue, a simple cast-bronze "Slope," a lush nocturnal photograph of sailboats moored off Corsica. Gramsma's abstruse theorizing posits the sum of these parts as a sort of economic exchange between artist and viewer, but enjoying them merely as willfully strange objects is equally, if not more, satisfying. Through Dec. 17. (Haswellediger, 465 W. 23rd St. 212-206-8955.)

WILL RYMAN
A life-size papier-mâché model of a newsstand is stocked with cigarettes, candy, soda, alarmist newspapers, frivolous magazines—a cornucopia of the bad-for-you. The vender, who looks like he's giving visitors the evil eye, might as well be peddling decay. A second room is filled with thirty attenuated gray figures whose mouths are open as though singing or screaming, many with sorrowful, Munchishly warped expressions. The slipshod manufacture, rife with dollops of paste and exposed chicken wire, reveals the roughness of the sculptor's touch, while the fluid composition of the crowd scene suggests a director's influence—and, like the psychically loaded newsstand, recalls Ryman's background in theatre. Through Dec. 17. (Gasser & Grunert, 524 W. 19th St. 212-807-9494.)

DAVID SALLE
The engulfing, destructive tornadoes of Salle's native Kansas are cited as one reference for his new "Vortex" paintings. But these psychedelic maelstroms speak to any media-saturated American locale. Hackneyed, smiling archetypal figures get sucked into spiralling holes at the center of the canvases. Suddenly, we're not in Kansas anymore. A hodgepodge of plainly drawn, flatly colored images—planes, fairy-tale references, pools of water—call to mind James Rosenquist's and Jeff Koons's recent work, as well as the Neo-Surrealism and mytho-historicizing of the German painter Neo Rauch. This is the most interesting dialogue Salle has entered into in years. Through Dec. 17. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

"Haircut," from 1956, by Saul Leiter, at Greenberg.

CATHERINE SULLIVAN
Elements of Brechtian farce and choreographer's tragedy, film noir and television sitcom, period melodrama and social fable all merge in Sullivan's five-channel video "The Chittendens." Filmed in both black-and-white and blazing color and scored by the composer Sean Griffin, the project is performed by an ensemble of sixteen actors, each assigned a repertoire of schematic "attitudes." Cutting between and juxtaposing these stylized maneuvers, Sullivan stages a mesmerizing, comical, and thrillingly bizarre meditation on the tics and tropes that make up what we call "character" and "relationship." Through Dec. 23. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

"NUDES IN VOGUE"
Vogue commissioned a series of unconventional nudes by the artists Vanessa Beecroft, Jeff Koons, Elizabeth Peyton, Richard Prince, Julian Schnabel, and Cindy Sherman for a feature in its December issue; the originals are on display at Mitchell-Innes & Nash in a show curated by editor-at-large Dodie Kazanjian. Through Dec. 23. (534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.)

Short List

APRIL GORNIK: Danese, 535 W. 24th St. 212-223-2227. Through Dec. 23. **HANS HAACKE:** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through Dec. 23. **GWEN HARDIE:** Dinter, 547 W. 27th St. 212-947-2818. Through Dec. 23. **MONA HATOUM:** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474. Through Dec. 22. **RONI HORN:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through Dec. 23. **MIKE KELLEY:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Dec. 17. **MARY ELLEN MARK:** Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889; and Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610. Through Dec. 23. **TIM NOBLE AND SUE WEBSTER:** Bortolami Dayan, 510 W. 25th St. 212-727-2050. Through Dec. 23. **BILL VIOLA:** James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500. Through Dec. 22. **ANDY WARHOL:** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through Dec. 17. **REBECCA WARREN:** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through Dec. 23. **"VII":** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Dec. 23.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

MALACHI FARRELL
Farrell's installation, which inaugurates this Lower East Side space, is a wacky, exuberant celebration of the skyscraper as modern icon, postmodern scourge, and, finally, terrorist target. Nestled in a pit of crumpled brown paper bags and scattered boxes is a sextet of miniature cardboard towers with cardboard arms attached to their sides. The arms are controlled by motion detectors and computer software, so they move like a drill team to soundtracks ranging from an aerobics class to vintage Public Enemy rap to code-red terror alerts. "Nothing Stops a New Yorker" is cheerfully demented, but, for those who witnessed 9/11 at closer range than Farrell (a recent transplant from Paris), it's perhaps a bit glib. Through Dec. 22. (Thrust, 114 Bowery. 212-431-4802.)

DANCE

"THE NUTCRACKER"
New York City Ballet performs Balanchine's version of this classic Christmas story, which captures the poignancy of the moment at which a girl is about to leave her childhood behind. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Dec. 13-15 at 6, Dec. 16 at 8, Dec. 17 at 2 and 8, Dec. 18 at 1 and 5, and Dec. 19-20 at 6. Through Dec. 30.)

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE
The company's chronic challenge is finding works worthy of its superlative dancers. In its third week at City Center, it solves the problem by mounting works choreographed by the dancers themselves. "Acceptance in Surrender," by the choreographic team of Hope Boykin, Abdur-Rahim Jackson, and Matthew Rushing, is an admirable first effort. The scenario, in which a broken woman is rescued by angels (in the form of three of the company's best male dancers), counts as stock material for this group, but the treatment is fresh and genuine—and what angels! A new production of "Witness," the final solo choreographed by Ailey himself, also has its première. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Dec. 14-16 at 8, Dec. 17 at 2 and 8, Dec. 18 at 3 and 7:30, and Dec. 20 at 7. Through Jan. 1.)

WALLY CARDONA QUARTET
To close BAM's Next Wave season, the ascendant downtown choreographer Wally Cardona transforms the Harvey Theatre's stage into a grid of three hundred skinny, teetering columns. The New York première of "Everywhere" finds barefoot men and women in drab tops and colorful bottoms moving through the imaginary hedgerows like kids at play. Cardona's quirky, original body language ranges from floppy doll to flight attendant to jogger to disco dancer to finishing-school girl. Superimposed over the arresting action are two layers of sound: Phil Kline creates a surround-sound collage with fifty boom boxes, and the rocking string quartet Ethel plays live. (651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Dec. 13 and Dec. 15-17 at 7:30.)

ARMITAGE GONE! DANCE
Karole Armitage's work has always come in trendy packages. In the eighties, it was East Village chic; now it's Benetton-ad multicultural. But deeper down the dances show a true classicist, twisting and extending ballet à la Balanchine. For her new piece, "In This Dream That Dogs Me," the set, once again by David Salle, incorporates red velvet curtains and calligraphically arranged piping. Calligraphy also marks the choreography, the movement now sinuous, now angular. Krumping, the frenetic Los Angeles street form, makes a brief appearance, but the heart of the work is a series of pas de deux in which a woman is clearly in control—no matter how languorous she seems, how hauled, bent, or stretched. With live music by Annie Gosfield. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Dec. 13-16 at 8, Dec. 17 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 18 at 2 and 7.)

COMPAGNIE MARIE CHOUINARD
The uninhibited, body-conscious company from Montreal is primal and exacting in "Chorale," one of two New York premières on the bill at the Joyce. The Egyptian-themed rock number has black wigs, black eye makeup, and thin black stripes skimming the dancers' crotches and breasts; its undulating torsos fall somewhere between MTV and the tribal circle. In "Étude No. 1," Chouinard imprisons a lone female dancer in steel-tipped shoes on a blue rectangle, then puts her through a marathon of spastic, tap-like exercises. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Dec. 13-17 at 8 and Dec. 18 at 2.)

"PRONE"
In John Jasperse's latest piece, the audience participates by lying down among the three dancers. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Dec. 13-14 at 8 and Dec. 15-17 at 7 and 9.)

CADEN MANSON/BIG ART GROUP
Backed by a wide green screen and a few large video screens, the live actors of "House of No More" (seen last year at P.S. 122) play to downstage closed-circuit cameras; their images are beamed live onto a flickering transom of pre-filmed images. Manson's technique furnishes more provocations than the frantic story, a low-grade pulp thriller that's all chases, shrieks, and arguments. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Dec. 14-16 at 7:30 and Dec. 17 at 7:30 and 10. Through Dec. 22.)

GOLDEN DRAGON ACROBATS
The troupe from Henan, China, continues its run. (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Dec. 15-16 at 7, Dec. 17 at 2 and 7, Dec. 18 at noon and 5, and Dec. 20 at 7. Through Jan. 1.)

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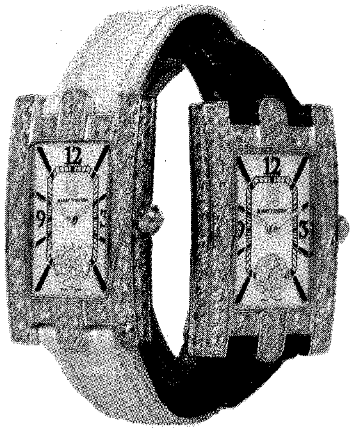
bearing gifts.



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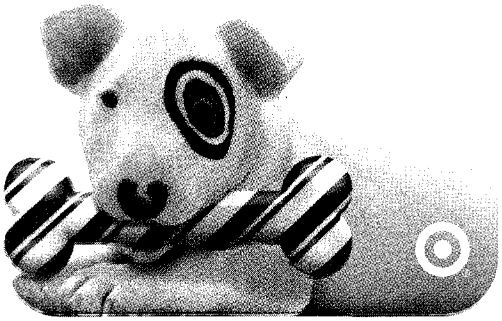

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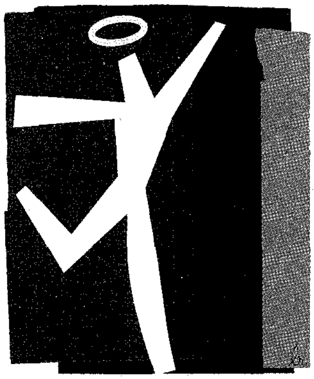
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ST. CHRISTOPHER

Christopher Williams likes saints. Part of the attraction, he says, is the "sensational quality of their lives"—the fact that they kept pet lions and ate locusts and walked around with their heads cut off. He also admires their strength of character, a quality that he thinks needs stressing these days. "And it doesn't hurt," he adds, "that medieval composers wrote beautiful music for these saints."



LAURIE ROSENWALD

Williams's "Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins," with eleven dance portraits of female saints, was a hit last spring at P.S. 122. Now Williams is working on a companion piece, "The Golden Legend," about male saints. St. Stephen's routine will be set to an organum by Pérotin, one of the earliest Western examples of four-part polyphony. On Dec. 17 at St. Mark's Danspace, Williams will show what he's come up with so far and will offer excerpts from another work in progress, "The Portuguese Suite," inspired by Amália Rodrigues's renditions of fado, the form that the Portuguese describe as somewhere between singing and screaming.

—Joan Acocella

"BALLETTO STILETTO"
The feisty downtown choreographer Heidi Latsky's holiday show is a party-girl adaptation of the Brothers Grimm's "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." (La Mama E.T.C., 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Dec. 15-17 at 7:30 and Dec. 18 at 2:30 and 7:30.)

DANIEL GWIRTZMAN DANCE COMPANY
"Chapters," Gwirtzman's episodic new work for himself, Cary McWilliam, and Jason Ignacio, depicts a man and a woman as they meet, fall in love, and have a child. Brave enough to depict the child's joy in learning to walk (convincingly portrayed by the compact Ignacio) along with the woman's vanity and the man's violence, Gwirtzman nevertheless keeps the explicit relationships mostly abstract, allowing them to inflect his agonistic acrobatics. (Citigroup Theatre, 405 W. 55th St. 212-868-4444. Dec. 16-17 at 8 and Dec. 18 at 3.)

NEW YORK THEATRE BALLET
An hour-long, child-friendly version of "The Nutcracker." (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. Dec. 17-18 at 11 A.M., 1, and 3:30.)

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS AND ELIZA MILLER
Three works in progress investigating Catholic iconography. Christopher Williams performs a solo from "The Golden Legend" and sections from "The Portuguese Suite," a dance about Catholicism's effects on an interracial gay couple, which is set to fado ballads by Amália Rodrigues. In "O Death," Eliza Miller puts bluegrass and folk-art images into the form of the Requiem Mass. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Dec. 17 at 3.)

SAVION GLOVER
In what has become an annual holiday event, the tap-dance virtuoso comes to the Joyce, this time for a four-week run. The first year, he sang; the second, he went classical; this year's surprise is yet to be announced. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Dec. 20 at 8. Through Jan. 15.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Dec. 14 at 8: Ruth Ann Swenson (singing the role of Micaëla) and Denyce Graves (in the title role) add their star power to the ongoing revival of **"Carmen,"** with Marco Berti as Don José and Erwin Schrott, a rising young bass in Europe, as Escamillo; the excellent Philippe Jordan conducts. ♦ Dec. 17 at 8: With Ana Maria Martinez replacing Swenson. (This is the final performance.) ♦ Dec. 15 at 8: The final performance of **"La Bohème,"** featuring Hei-Kyung Hong, Alexandra Deshorties, Roberto Aronica, and Vladimir Chernov; Philippe Auguin. ♦ Dec. 16 at 8: In **"An American Tragedy,"** the resourceful composer Tobias Picker and his librettist, Gene Scheer, have crafted a sturdy frame for Theodore Dreiser's earnest and overbearing novel about American money and morals. The opera boasts an abundance of potent choruses, intricately wrought ensemble scenes, and florid arias—but not the transformative power that turns good source material into great art. The performances of Patricia Racette, Susan Graham, and Nathan Gunn are vocally alluring and dramatically assured; Dolora Zajick chews the scenery in an Azucena-like mother role, but the intensity of her voice is undeniable. James Conlon conducts. ♦ Dec. 17 at 1:30: Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón take the roles of Gilda and the Duke in a hotly awaited revival of **"Rigoletto."** With Carlo Guelfi (in the title role), Nancy Fabiola Herrera, and Eric Halfvarson; Asher Fisch. ♦ Dec. 19 at 8: This year's holiday show is **"Die Fledermaus,"** that delectable dollop of Viennese schlag, offered in Otto Schenk's period-piece production. The wild card in the deck will be provided by the actor Bill Irwin, taking the comic speaking role of the jailer Frosch. Also with Sondra Radvanovsky, Marina Domashenko, and Bo Skovhus; Jacques Lacombe. ♦ Dec. 20 at 8: The soprano Elizabeth Futral shone in the autumn performances of **"Lucia di Lammermoor"**; now the production returns, with the estimable Ramón Vargas singing Edgardo to her Lucia. Also with Charles Taylor and John Relyea; Edoardo Müller. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

DICAPO OPERA
New York's third professional opera company offers a rare chance to hear two of Rachmaninoff's major vocal works—the cantata "The Bells" (a setting of a poem by Edgar Allan Poe) and the one-act opera "Francesca da Rimini" (after Dante's Inferno). Pacien Mazzagatti conducts a cast featuring vocal soloists from the Bolshoi Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera. (St. Jean Baptiste Church, 184 E. 76th St. 212-288-9438. Dec. 17 at 8.)

HOLIDAY MUSIC

"MESSIAH"
The Choir of St. Thomas Church, the finest Anglican ensemble in the country, offers a pair of performances of Handel's holiday hit in its magnificent space, conducted by its new leader, John Scott (the former music director of St. Paul's Cathedral). (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 212-664-9360. Dec. 13 and Dec. 15 at 7:30.) ♦ St. Thomas has got some serious competition of late from the New York Philharmonic, which fields about half of the ensemble in a quartet of performances conducted by Richard Hickox, with the Met bass-baritone John Relyea among the vocal soloists. The Westminster Symphonic Choir assists. (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 212-875-5656. Dec. 14-15 at 7:30 and Dec. 16-17 at 8.) ♦ Another excellent "Messiah" has traditionally been offered by the Musica Sacra chorus and its longtime director, Richard Westenburg; this year's soloists include the shining City Opera soprano Lisa Saffer. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 18 and Dec. 20 at 8.) ♦ The Oratorio Society of New York, which traces its history back to the beginning of Carnegie Hall, returns for its annual "Messiah," conducted by Kent Tritle; the soloists include the mezzo-soprano Mary Phillips and the baritone Philip Cutlip. (212-247-7800. Dec. 19 at 8.)

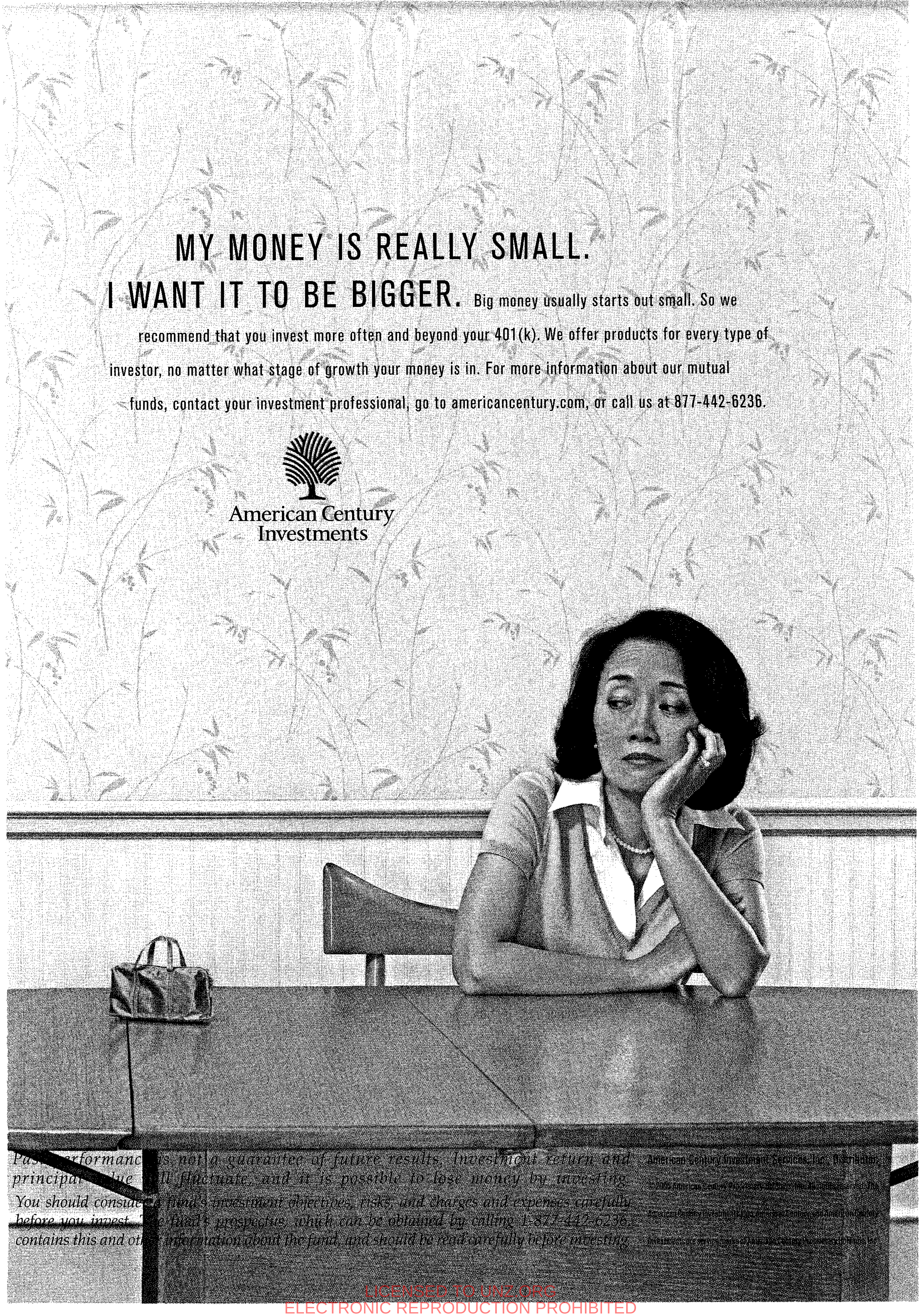
COLLEGIATE CHORALE
To hear a Christmas concert amid the intimate grandeur of the Metropolitan Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall is a classic New York experience. This week is highlighted by the excellent Collegiate Chorale, which performs Vivaldi's "Gloria" and "Magnificat" under its music director, Robert Bass. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Dec. 14 at 6:30 and 8:30. For a complete listing of concerts at the museum and at the Cloisters, see www.metmuseum.org.)

"WORKS & PROCESS" HOLIDAY CONCERT
Nothing conventional happens in the Guggenheim Museum's performance series: its holiday concert is conducted by George Steel, who will combine such favorite anthems as "Once in Royal David's City" with Charles Wuorinen's "Be Merry All That Be Present," amid other exotica. With the Vox Vocal Ensemble and the Graham Ashton Brass Ensemble. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. Dec. 16-17 at 6. No tickets required.)

LITTLE ORCHESTRA SOCIETY: "AMAHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS"
Twenty-five years ago, Gian Carlo Menotti created a production of his poignant Christmas parable from 1951—the most popular American opera by far—specifically for Dino Anagnost's company. Anagnost continues the yearly tradition, conducting a family-oriented performance at Avery Fisher Hall. (212-971-9500. Dec. 17 at 11 A.M. and 1.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Christian Zacharias's deep insights into the Mozart piano concertos sound deceptively modest: neither



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prettifying the music nor overwhelming it, he plays with a self-confident dedication that illuminates with an Olympian glow. Also an experienced conductor, he makes his Philharmonic conducting début by leading the Concerto in B-Flat Major, K. 456, from the keyboard, in the middle of a program that also features two of Haydn's "Paris" Symphonies (No. 83, "The Hen," and No. 86). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Dec. 14-15 at 7:30, Dec. 16 at 11 A.M., and Dec. 17 at 8.)

LES TALENS LYRIQUES
Christophe Rousset's dashing early-music group (for which he is also the solo harpsichordist) comes to Zankel Hall for an evening of music by Bach (the Orchestral Suite No. 1 and the Concerto for Harpsichord and Oboe, BWV 1059), Leclair, and Rameau. (212-247-7800. Dec. 16 at 7:30.)

LEON FLEISHER WORKSHOP
The Curtis Institute of Music Chamber Orchestra serves as the house band for the eminent pianist's workshop on the Mozart piano concertos, which concludes with four promising young artists performing two public concerts under Fleisher's baton. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Dec. 17 at 7:30 and Dec. 18 at 3.)

PRISM CONCERTS
A series directed by Juilliard's choral conductor, Judith Clurman, begins its season with an ambitious evening of scenes from Handel's oratorios (including "Samson" and "Judas Maccabeus"). The singers include the soprano Jennifer Aylmer and the baritone Kevin Burdette, with the Brooklyn Youth Chorus and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Central Synagogue, Lexington Ave. at 55th St. 212-581-0400. Dec. 18 at 7.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC AT THE 92ND STREET Y
The violinist Jaime Laredo and his wife, the cellist Sharon Robinson, join some fine friends—including the pianist Peter Serkin—for music by Schubert (the "Trout" Quintet) and Brahms (the Piano Quartet in A Major). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Dec. 13-14 at 8.)

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER BAND
Elaine Comparone's Baroque ensemble teams up with the Church of the Transfiguration's Choir of Men and Boys for a holiday Bach concert that includes not only several of the composer's concertos for one, two, and three harpsichords (with Comparone joined by Bradley Brookshire and Claudia Dumschat) but also Pergolesi's "Magnificat" and a selection of carols. A reception follows. (1 E. 29th St. 212-684-4174. Dec. 14 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
The violinist Mark Peskanov and three able colleagues essay Beethoven's Six String Quartets, Op. 18. Dec. 15-16 at 7:30: Quartets Nos. 1-3. ♦ Dec. 17 at 7:30 and Dec. 18 at 4: Quartets Nos. 4-6. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

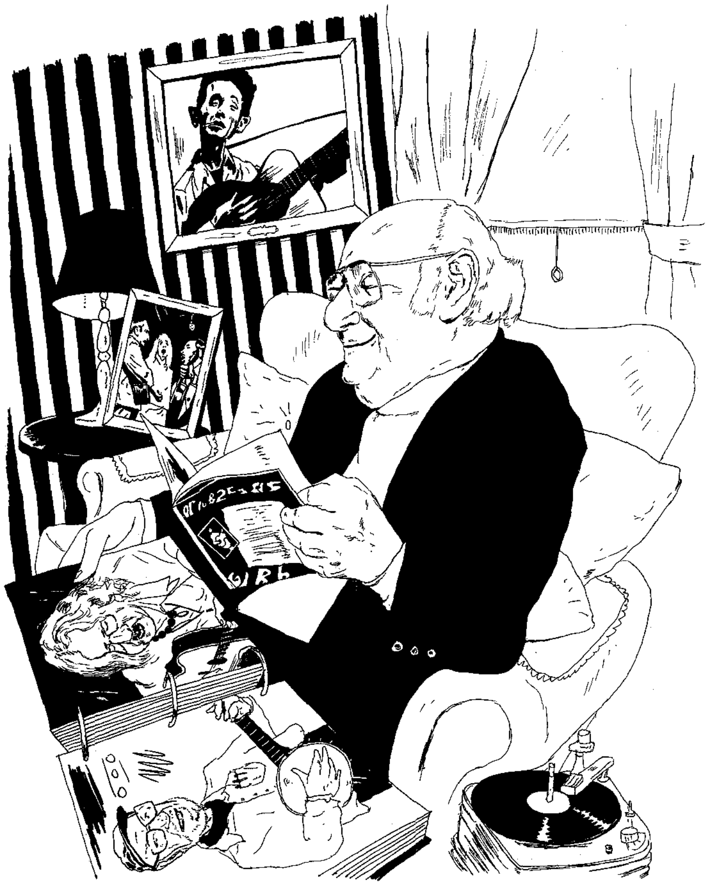
RICHARD STOLZMAN AND EMANUEL AX
The always engaging clarinettist, with his pianist friend, offers masterworks by Debussy, Brahms (the Clarinet Sonata No. 1 in F Minor), Bernstein, Beaser, and Foss at the Metropolitan Museum. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Dec. 16 at 8.)

ETHEL: "SOLO (SORTA)"
As part of a multi-concert residency, the seriously cool string quartet—with a new violinist, Cornelius Dufallo—performs premières of music by John King and Don Byron ("Four Thoughts on Marvin Gaye"). (BAMCafé, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Dec. 16 at 9.)

MOVIES OPENING

ELECTRIC SHADOWS
In this paean to the cinema, directed by Xiao Jiang, a young man discovers that the woman who has hit him on the head with a brick shares his love of movies. In Mandarin. Opening Dec. 16. (ImaginAsian.)

THE FAMILY STONE
A comedy written and directed by Thomas Bezucha, about a bohemian family's holiday gathering at which the son introduces his business-woman fiancée. With Claire Danes, Diane Keaton, Sarah Jessica Parker, Dermot Mulroney, and Rachel McAdams. Opening Dec. 16. (In wide release.)



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ANDY FRIEDMAN

THE GRACE LEE PROJECT
The filmmaker Grace Lee investigates stereotypes of Asian-American women by interviewing other women named Grace Lee. Opening Dec. 14. (Film Forum.)

HAPPY HERE AND NOW
Michael Almereyda ("Nadja") directed this cyber-mystery set in New Orleans, about a woman who disappears in a suspected virtual-reality identity theft. Opening Dec. 14. (IFC Center.)

KING KONG
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 14. (In wide release.)

THE PRODUCERS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Dec. 16. (Ziegfeld.)

THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA
A ranch foreman launches his own investigation into the murder of his best friend. Tommy Lee Jones directs and stars. Opening Dec. 14. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

TRAPPED BY THE MORMONS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Dec. 15. (Pioneer Theatre.)

NOW PLAYING

BE HERE TO LOVE ME
The Texan singer and composer Townes Van Zandt died in 1997. Long before his death, he had—without trying, or even noticing—created something of a cult. That is seldom an enviable status, and Margaret Brown's wise documentary scorns the cultish approach, preferring to level a sympathetic gaze at the broken figure that Van Zandt used to cut and to listen calmly to the sadness that he left in his wake. Through a blend of photographs and aging footage, we watch the lanky boy grow taller but never wider, and learn with horror of the electric-shock treatment administered to him in his youth. Ever after, there was something stunned in his demeanor, and much of the movie's fascination rises from the gulf between the drug-dosed wildcat of legend—the guy with the shotgun and the bottle of booze—and the serene, low-voiced charmer who muses to the camera and performs his wrenching songs in a croon not far from a cry. We get some twenty-five songs in all, plus testimony from Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, the benignly indiscreet Guy Clark, and Emmylou Harris (who gives every sign of being immortal). Brown conceived her movie, she says, to be "vinyl, not CD," and the ride of it does indeed deliver a rough-edged truth.—*Anthony Lane* (Cinema Village.)

BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
In the summer of 1963, Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) herd the sheep on Brokeback Mountain, in Wyoming, and fall in love. Ang Lee's movie traces the ups and downs of that love over many years, making it clear that the downs are fated to outnumber the ups. The film has a curious motion at the beginning, managing to seem at once hectic and sluggish; once the heroes start to grow up, however, and thus to struggle against their feelings, the story comes painfully alive, and the performances stretch toward the tragic. There is fine support from Anne Hathaway and Michelle Williams as the baffled wives of the two men and from Kate Mara as Ennis's teen-age daughter, but the picture belongs to Ledger, whose downcast gaze and chewed-up words bear almost unbearable testimony to a heart under siege. Any attempt to promote this as an issue movie, gripped by an agenda, feels badly misplaced; the only issue here is the oldest and most sorrowful one of all.—*A.L.* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/12/05.) (In wide release.)

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE
In the thick of wartime, four children, Peter (William Moseley), Susan (Anna Popplewell), Edmund (Skandar Keynes), and Lucy (Georgie Henley), arrive, suitably parentless, at a country house. From there it is a short step to Narnia, itself a land in conflict. Thanks to the White Witch (Tilda Swinton), a perpetual winter has descended—a curse that will vanish only with the arrival of Aslan, a messianic lion (voiced by Liam Neeson). In the hands of the director Andrew Adamson, the transplanting of C. S. Lewis's tale to the screen is a loyal affair; if the snow-crusted magic of the children's initial discovery tends to melt, revealing a pageant-like stiffness in the later scenes, it is the fault as much of the original plot as of the adaptation. Swinton, with her see-through skin and icy eyes, makes a strong and alluring case for villainy; hopes that the movie may provoke a widespread religious conversion seem a little optimistic. The most serious shortcoming is the lack of a surging musical theme; is that

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not essential, if this Narnian venture is to be the first of many? With James McAvoy as Mr. Tumnus, the sweet-natured and treacherous faun.—*A.L.* (12/12/05) (In wide release.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

Puberty is never a pretty sight, but you have to say this for it: it doesn't let wizards off the hook. Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe) and his friend Ron (Rupert Grint), now in their early teens, are beset by the same vocal and emotional mayhem as their real-life equivalents. Hermione (Emma Watson) shows preternatural aplomb, but then she has been forty since the age of ten. Their pleasant existence at Hogwarts is disrupted by the arrival of two rival schools; each must furnish a contestant for the Triwizard Tournament, which is meant to demonstrate courage but actually resembles the lower strain of Japanese game show. The resulting tale is less tangled than its predecessors; the director, Mike Newell, has a surer sense of pace and a better handle on the bafflements of boarding-school life. He is stuck, however, with the grandiose requirements of the Potter franchise, which deems that every installment should rise to a final joust between good and evil, whether we like it or not. In short, the magic of Harry, on its fourth outing, is starting to wear thin. With Brendan Gleeson, who enjoys himself hugely as a rolling-eyed defender against the dark arts.—*A.L.* (11/28/05) (In wide release.)

THE ICE HARVEST

Harold Ramis's latest film, co-written by Robert Benton and Richard Russo, is an example of the disaster that may result when smart people try to make a crass movie. John Cusack is a low-life lawyer in Wichita; Billy Bob Thornton is his partner, the owner of a strip joint; Connie Nielsen, made up like a nineteen-forties femme fatale, is the slinky, mysterious broad whom Cusack lusts after. The boys skim two million dollars from the illegal holdings of a local Mr. Big (Randy Quaid), but the plot, in which everyone betrays everyone, is extraordinarily vague. The movie takes place on a dreadfully rainy Christmas Eve and features an anti-seasonal whiff of tawdry deals and cynical violence, all of it spiced with a peculiar patois that sounds like Mickey Spillane talking dirtier than he could get away with fifty years ago. Oliver Platt has some good bits as a respectable man who gets wildly drunk, but otherwise the entire movie feels like slumming.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

KIRIKOU AND THE SORCERESS

Michel Ocelot's splendid animated feature from 1998 tells a sensual, guilt-free fairy tale—a West African fable about the power of original innocence. A tiny baby boy named Kirikou pushes himself out of his mother at birth and rarely stops moving until he defeats the sorceress Karaba, who has laid waste to his village. Most of Kirikou's powers are simple, not super: the bravery of someone who doesn't know his limits, the forceful logic of untainted intelligence, a knack for healing rather than revenge. Everything about the movie proves to be gloriously disarming. Ocelot lays out striking Rousseau-like forms and colors with Art Deco jazziness and lustre; his supporting human characters satirize meanness yet testify to redemption. (There are also some lovable squirrels.) It's the rare piece of filmed folk art that feels more authentic because of the moviemaker's sophistication.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Dec. 17-18.)

MRS. HENDERSON PRESENTS

In the nineteen-thirties, Mrs. Laura Henderson (Judi Dench), a fiercely rude and reactionary widow, took over a decrepit London theatre, the Windmill, and hired a Jewish manager-impresario, Vivian Van Damm (Bob Hoskins), to run it. As they alternately charmed and infuriated each other, the unlikely pair managed to stage non-stop musical-review shows for Londoners and then for young soldiers, continuing right through the war as bombs fell on every side. When the competition caught up to them, they hired girls to pose nude but in static tableaux so as not to alarm the official censor (Christopher Guest). Stephen Frears's new movie, written by Martin Sherman, is a valentine to British vaudeville in a gently risqué period. The picture borders on obviousness and self-love (the gallantry of the theatre people gets a little thick), but Dench and Hoskins go at each other like pros, and the pleasantly undistinguished quality of the musical numbers feels right. Mrs. Henderson, who lost her son in the First World War, apparently had the idea that boys should not die in battle before seeing a beautiful naked girl at least once.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE POWER OF NIGHTMARES

This three-part BBC documentary by Adam Curtis, which made a splash in London, purports to reveal the Big Lie of American neoconservatives regarding the so-called international terrorist network, but instead it purveys several large-scale obfuscations of its own. From the equation of the philosopher Leo Strauss

POP NOTES

THE SNOWMAN COMETH, STAYETH

Hip-hop is a lot like high school, where consensus rules: it is painfully clear who the cool kids are. And for most of 2005 the twenty-eight-year-old Atlanta rapper Young Jeezy has been the coolest kid, important to both Internet obsessives and casual consumers. Late last year, Jeezy became part of a group of Atlanta rappers called Boyz N Da Hood that was signed by the hip-hop mogul P. Diddy but left the group after his excellent début, **"Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101"** (Def Jam), went platinum. (It has sold more than three times as many copies as the self-titled effort by the manufactured band.) In the past few months, Jeezy has become the rapper everyone wants as a guest on his record—he has already appeared on songs with Jay-Z, Bun B, and T.I., among others. Jeezy's voice is a serrated drawl, full of breath and usually ending in a rising whine, as if every line were a variation of one question: "What do you think of that?" His trademark phrase isn't even a phrase, really—it's simply the word "yeah," drawn out for several seconds and sounding like it means anything but what you think it means. Jeezy's main topic is dealing cocaine—hence his "Snowman" nickname—and he writes in clear, sly couplets that make light of illegal antics: "I'm emotional, I hug the block / I'm so emotional, I love my Glock." The music on "Thug Motivation" is sparse and favors minor keys, surrounding Jeezy in an airy darkness that pleasantly undermines his punch lines. Jeezy's duet with the light-voiced Senegal-born singer Akon, "Soul Survivor," is currently the No. 5 song on the *Billboard* singles chart. The song is an effective, if slightly florid, combination of Akon's conversational vocals and Jeezy's fatalism: "Run these streets all day / I can sleep when I die." Who he suggests, in demeanor if not in sound, is the late Notorious B.I.G., an ex-dealer who seemed wise beyond his years and could get you on his side without ever apologizing for his sins.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

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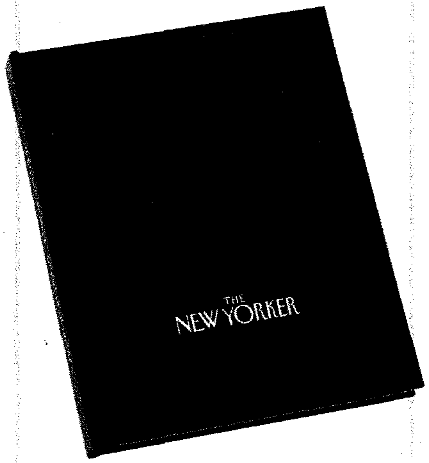

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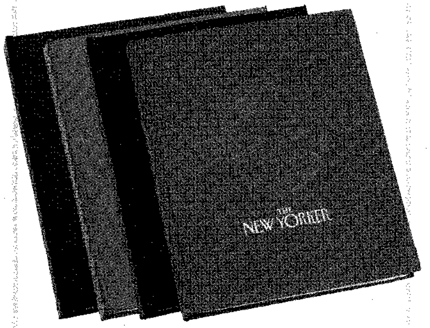

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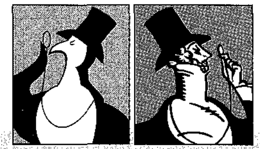

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(who was outraged by the rise of Hitler) with the theologian Sayyid Qutb (who was outraged by co-ed dancing) to the reliance on standard-issue exploitation-film techniques (shock cuts, ominous music, extreme close-ups of eyes to imply diabolical intent), Curtis stacks the deck in a way that makes Michael Moore seem evenhanded, yet does so without daring to put himself on the line as Moore does. Indeed, despite an interesting collection of archival footage and out-of-the-way interviews, Curtis's attacks are so haughtily tendentious that they may well provoke sympathy for their neocon targets among viewers who previously had none.—*Richard Brody* (Cinema Village.)

THE PRODUCERS

Susan Stroman directed the smash Broadway musical that Mel Brooks (along with Thomas Meehan) adapted from his madcap 1968 film about a Broadway producer and his accountant, who put on a hopefully doomed Hitler musical after learning that they'd make more money from a flop than from a hit. Stroman has now directed the film version, transferring her superb musical numbers and recapturing the brilliant performances of some of the original Broadway cast. Nathan Lane, who stars as the about-to-pop Broadway impresario Max Bialystock, and Matthew Broderick, who plays the nervous, harried accountant Leo Bloom, are a great match, gleefully lobbing verbal volleys at each other. The film begins shakily, but when Broderick steps up for his first big number the sets open up, some tap-dancing beauties are brought out, and the film begins to fly. The surging vitality of the script allows the actors (Will Ferrell, Uma Thurman, and Roger Bart, among others) to find sure footing, and Gary Beach gives a standout performance as the drag-wearing musical director who eventually is called upon to star (his Judy Garland bit is priceless). No matter how familiar the material may seem, Stroman's intelligent direction reproduces the energy of the original film.—*Bruce Diones* (Ziegfeld.)

SYRIANA

Stephen Gaghan's tense, outrageously complicated thriller—a major film but not a great one—is about oil, a corrupted C.I.A. that strong-arms for the oil companies, and the politics of the Middle East. The principal players are a large Houston-based oil concern and its Washington law firm; an emirate in the Gulf; an aging C.I.A. field operative (George Clooney); an industry analyst (Matt Damon) based in Europe; a couple of Pakistani oil workers who lose their jobs and wind up in a madrassa; and assorted terrorists, cynical bureaucrats, and bullying legal and corporate types. There is no real protagonist—or, rather, the protagonist is the oil business itself, which gets people killed, tortured, blown up, thrown on the junk heap. Gaghan constructs short, bristling scenes that often end abruptly with nasty implications hanging in the air. He hops all over the globe, and his method makes it impossible to develop anything in depth (you really have to see this movie twice in order to fully see it once), but he has a sharp tongue, moral urgency, and an amazingly fluent way with actors. With Christopher Plummer, Jeffrey Wright, Amanda Peet, and many, many others.—*D.D.* (12/5/05) (In wide release.)

TRANSAMERICA

In Duncan Tucker's directorial début, Felicity Huffman gives a fascinating performance as Bree (formerly Stanley), an overeducated, self-deprecating transsexual from L.A. on the verge of a sex-change operation. Bree finds out that she is the father of a teen-age son, Toby (Kevin Zegers), who needs bailing out of jail in New York, and her therapist won't approve her operation unless she owns up to the kid. Despite these contrived plot devices, Bree's desire to conceal her identities from Toby—as a transsexual and as his father—feels authentic, and Zegers brings warmth to his portrayal of a lost young man trying to act tough. The thin sentimentality offered at the end is no match for Huffman, who soldiers through the film with the pained bewilderment of Stanley, a woman caught in a man's body, haunting Bree's every move.—*Shauna Lyon* (IFC Center.)

TRAPPED BY THE MORMONS

This silent film tells the cautionary tale of Nora (Emily Riehl-Bedford), a dutiful young Englishwoman who jilts her officer fiancé for Isoldi Keane (Johnny Kat), a Mormon proselytizer who is also a hypnotist and a vampire. The film is a conceptual gag (the director Ian Allen based it on a 1922 silent film of the same title and substance); if it occasionally falls flat, it nonetheless plays for high artistic stakes—for who has not at some time been possessed by love, religion, or some other passionate delusion? Allen and his D.C.-based theatre company, Cherry Red, prove that the silent cinema derives its deepest inspiration from the dance: the startling gesture repertoire with which Allen invests his performers makes even a faked resurrection seem true to life.—*R.B.* (Pioneer Theatre.)

WAGON MASTER

"'Hell' ain't cussin', it's geography!" So explains Sandy (Harry Carey, Jr.), one of a pair of wisecracking young horse traders who are hired to lead a wagon train of Mormons westbound across the diabolically hot and hostile plains. John Ford made his most elemental Western without the mythic power of a John Wayne, setting up an inevitable clash between the pious pilgrims and a fleeing band of killers—yet the result is serene, even joyous. With its singing cowboys, square-dancing Mormons, and the trancelike drumming of Navajos (whom Ford views with admiration), this is the closest thing to a musical that Ford ever made. The rock cliffs of the valley remind wagon master Travis (Ben Johnson) of a cathedral; with the whooping ram's-horn call of the earthy Sister Ledeyard (Jane Darwell), Ford fills that cathedral with a primal, exultant folk Mass. Released in 1950.—*R.B.* (Pioneer Theatre; Dec. 18.)

WALK THE LINE

Joaquin Phoenix, with deep-set blue eyes, a long chin, and a scarred lip, is Johnny Cash; Reese Witherspoon, bouncy and smart, with long black tresses, is his beloved June Carter, of the country-singing Carter clan. Phoenix slings his guitar around and guns it at the audience in Cash's shambling style; his singing wavers in pitch, but, all in all, it's not bad. This bio-pic, covering Cash's youth and early manhood, written by James Mangold and Gill Dennis and directed by Mangold, is very pleasant but too conventionally conceived. Phoenix looks at times as if he wanted to kill someone, but the filmmakers haven't written anything interesting for him to say, and most of the time Cash comes off as furtive, weak, and lost. As June stares directly at Cash's weaknesses and nails him every time, "Walk the Line" becomes a kind of moralizing romantic comedy, in which he struggles to be a man worthy of her love and she struggles against her desire to have him. The picture offers some sidelong glances at life on the road in the convulsive 1955-56 period, in which country, R. & B., and nascent rock were all sloshing around together. With Robert Patrick as Cash's dead-eyed father and Ginnifer Goodwin as his first wife, who nags at him and wants him to stay home with her and the kids.—*D.D.* (11/21/05) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CAPOTE: In wide release (10/10/05). **A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE:** Village East Cinemas. **ISN'T THIS A TIME!:** Quad Cinema. **MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA:** In wide release. **THE SQUID AND THE WHALE:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas (10/24/05).

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"New-Filmmakers Presents." Dec. 14 at 7: Short- film program. ♦ Dec. 14 at 8: "The Pursuit of Happyness" (2005, Patrick McGuinn). ♦ "The Onion Presents." Dec. 15 at 8: "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" (1985, Tim Burton). ♦ Special presentations. Dec. 16 at 8: "Unessential Cinema: The Worst Years of Our Lives," educational videos from the nineteen-eighties. ♦ Dec. 17 at 9: "Mutual Appreciation" (2005, Andrew Bujalski). ♦ Dec. 18 at 3: "As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty" (2000, Jonas Mekas). ♦ Annual Christmas special: Films by Joseph Cornell. Dec. 17 at 3: "Children's Mag-

ical Movie Afternoon." Dec. 17 at 6:30: "Dream Films." ♦ "Storefront Films." Dec. 20 at 7:30: "Dirty Weekend" (1973, Dino Risi; in Italian).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"BAMcinématek Favorites." Dec. 14 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Dicembre" (1990, Antonio Monda; in Italian). The 6:50 screening is followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ "BAM Holiday Favorite." Dec. 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Gremlins" (1984, Joe Dante). ♦ "Hard Boiled and in the Mood: Tony Leung." Dec. 16 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, 9:15: "Cyclo" (1995, Tran Anh Hung; in Vietnamese). ♦ Dec. 17 at 4: "Days of Being Wild" (1991, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese, Tagalog, English, Mandarin, and Filipino). ♦ Dec. 17 at 6: "In the Mood for Love" (2000, Wong; in Cantonese, Shanghainese, and French). ♦ Dec. 17 at 8: "2046" (2004, Wong; in Cantonese, Japanese, and Mandarin). ♦ Dec. 18 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Happy Together" (1997, Wong; in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish). ♦ "A Popular Cinema: Nelson Pereira dos Santos." Dec. 19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman" (1971; in Portuguese, Tupi, and French). The 6:50 screening is followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Dec. 20 at 6 and 9: "Tent of Miracles" (1977; in Portuguese).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—"Essential Hitchcock." Dec. 14 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Sabotage" (1936). ♦ Dec. 14 at 2:35, 6:15, and 9:55: "Saboteur" (1942). ♦ Dec. 15 at 1, 5:15, and 9:25: "Foreign Correspondent" (1940). ♦ Dec. 15 at 3:20 and 7:30: "Lifeboat" (1944). ♦ Dec. 16-17 at 1, 4:45, and 8:30: "The 39 Steps" (1935). ♦ Dec. 16-17 at 2:45, 6:30, and 10:15: "The Lady Vanishes" (1938). ♦ Dec. 18 at 1, 3:30, 6, and 8:30 and Dec. 19 at 1 and 3:30: "Rebecca" (1940). ♦ Dec. 19 at 6 and 10:10: "Murder!" (1930). ♦ Dec. 19 at 8: "The Ring" (1927; silent). ♦ Dec. 20 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:40, and 9:50: "Shadow of a Doubt" (1943).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 20: "La Jeunesse, Vite! Young French Cinema 1959-1968." Dec. 20 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Model Shop" (1969, Jacques Demy).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Dec. 16-17: "Stop Making Sense" (1984, Jonathan Demme). ♦ "Weekend Classics." Dec. 16 and Dec. 18 at noon: "The American Soldier" (1970, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German) and "The City Tramp" (1966, Fassbinder; in German).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Early Autumn: Masterworks of Japanese Cinema from the National Film Center, Tokyo." All films are in Japanese. Dec. 14 at 6: "Flowers Have Fallen" (1938, Tamizo Ishida). ♦ Dec. 15 at 8 and Dec. 17 at 4: "Intentions of Murder" (1964, Shohei Imamura). ♦ Dec. 16 at 6:30: "Where Spring Comes Late" (1970, Yôji Yamada). ♦ Dec. 17 at 2: "Gate of Hell" (1953, Teinosuke Kinugasa). ♦ Through Dec. 22: "Bright Stars, Big City: Chinese Cinema's First Golden Era, 1922-1937." Except where noted, all films are silent with English intertitles or simultaneous translation. Dec. 14 at 6: "Coming Home" (1934, Zhu Shilin). ♦ Dec. 14 at 8: "Daybreak" (1933, Sun Yu). ♦ Dec. 15 at 6: "Song of the Fishermen" (1934, Cai Chusheng). ♦ Dec. 15 at 8: "Two Stars" (1931, Shi Dongshan). ♦ Dec. 16 at 8:45: "Street Angel" (1937, Yuan Muzhi; in Mandarin). ♦ Dec. 17 at 1:30: "Queen of Sports" (1934, Sun). ♦ Dec. 17 at 3:30: "Love and Duty" (1931, Bu Wancang). ♦ Dec. 17 at 8: "Red Heroine" (1929, Yao Shiquan). ♦ Dec. 18 at 2: "Amorous History of the Silver Screen II" (1931, Cheng Bugao). ♦ Dec. 18 at 3:30: "Dream of the West Chamber" (1927, Hou Yao) and "Labourer's Love" (1922, Zhang Shichuan). ♦ Dec. 18 at 5:15: "Blood of Love" (1932, Sun). ♦ Dec. 19 at 6: "The Goddess" (1934, Wu Yonggang). ♦ Dec. 19 at 8: "Wild Rose" (1932, Sun) and excerpts from early Chinese films. ♦ "Pixar: 20 Years of Animation." Dec. 14 at 8, Dec. 15 at 6, and Dec. 18 at 2: "Toy Story" (1995, John Lasseter) and short films. The Dec. 14 screening will be introduced by the director. ♦ Dec. 17 at 7:30 and Dec. 18 at 5: "A Bug's Life" (1998, Lasseter and Andrew Stanton) and short films. ♦ "Artist's Choice: Stephen Sondheim." Dec. 19 at 6: "Contract" (1980, Krzysztof Zanussi; in Polish, French, and English). ♦ Dec. 19 at 8:30: "Character" (1997, Mike van Diem; in Dutch, English, German, and French).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Jan. 2: "Laurel and Hardy." Dec. 14 at 10:30 A.M. and Dec. 17-18 at 2: "Block-Heads" (1938, John G. Blystone) and "Come Clean" (1931, James W. Horne). ♦ Dec. 17 at 4: Laurel and Hardy in Spanish (without subtitles). "La Vida Nocturna" (1930, James Parrott) and "Politiquerías" (1931, Horne). ♦ Dec. 18 at 4: Talkie shorts (program two). ♦ "Digital Play Goes to the Movies." Dec. 16 at 7:30: "The Warriors" (1979, Walter Hill). ♦ "Black Light: Films from the African Diaspora." Dec. 17-18 at 12: "Kirikou and the Sorceress" (†). ♦ Repertory nights. Dec. 17-18 at 6:30: "Sunrise" (1927, F. W. Murnau; silent).

PIONEER CINEMA
155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—"Mormonsploitation!" Dec. 16 at midnight: "Primer" (2004, Shane Carruth). ♦ Dec. 18 at 7:15: "Wagon Master" (†). ♦ Dec. 19 at 7: "A Mormon Maid" (1917, Robert Z. Leonard; silent). ♦ Dec. 20 at 7: "The Mormon Church Explains It All to You," a program of Mormon short films.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Dec. 16-17: "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (1981, Steven Spielberg).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Thalia Film Currents." Dec. 18 at 4 and Dec. 20 at 8:30: "Balzac and the Little Chinese

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Seamstress" (2002, Dai Sijie; in Mandarin and French). ♦ "Thalia Film Classics." Dec. 18 at 7 and Dec. 20 at 6: "The Seven Samurai" (1954, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Dec. 28: "Spanish Cinema Now." All films are in Spanish except where noted. Dec. 14 at 1:45 and 6:30 and Dec. 17 at 1: "El Lobo" (2004, Miguel Courtois). ♦ Dec. 14 at 4:15 and 9: "Something to Remember Me By" (2005, Patricia Ferreira). ♦ Dec. 15 at 1:30 and 6:20: "The Adventures of Don Quixote" (1933, G. W. Pabst; in English). ♦ Dec. 15 at 3:30 and 8:15: "Don Quijote de la Mancha" (1947, Rafael Gil). ♦ Dec. 16 at 2 and 8:30: "The Method" (2005, Marcelo Piñeyro). ♦ Dec. 16 at 4:15 and Dec. 18 at 6:15: "The Sky Turns" (2004, Mercedes Álvarez). ♦ Dec. 16 at 7: "Don Quixote" (1923, Maurice Elvey; silent). ♦ Dec. 17 at 3:30 and Dec. 18 at 2: "Unconscious" (2004, Joaquín Oristrell). ♦ Dec. 17 at 5:45: "Idiot Love" (2004, Ventura Pons). ♦ Dec. 17 at 8:15, Dec. 18 at 4:15, and Dec. 19 at 1: A program of Spanish short films. ♦ Dec. 18 at 8:30: "Hard Times" (2005, Manuel Martín Cuenca). ♦ Dec. 19 at 9 and Dec. 20 at 3:15: "Ausentes" (2005, Daniel Calparsoro).

READINGS AND TALKS

"WHY IS CARICATURE FUNNY?"
The art historian Patricia Mainardi recently curated a show of works by Henry Monnier—the nineteenth-century draftsman whose irony, according to Balzac, was as sharp as a dagger—at the City University of New York's Graduate Center. On Dec. 14 at 6:30 she gives an illustrated lecture in conjunction with the show. (Fifth Ave. at 34th St. 212-817-8215.)

TRAV S.D.
The author of "No Applause, Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous" talks about the once popular art form in what was formerly its greatest stage, the Palace Theatre. A rare tour of the establishment, which is now a legit Broadway house, is included. (Broadway at 47th St. For more information, call 212-764-4112, ext. 203. Dec. 14 at 5:30.)

JESSICA COEN
The editor of the media-obsessed Web site Gawker talks with J. J. Goldberg, the editor-in-chief of the *Forward*. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Dec. 15 at 7:30.)

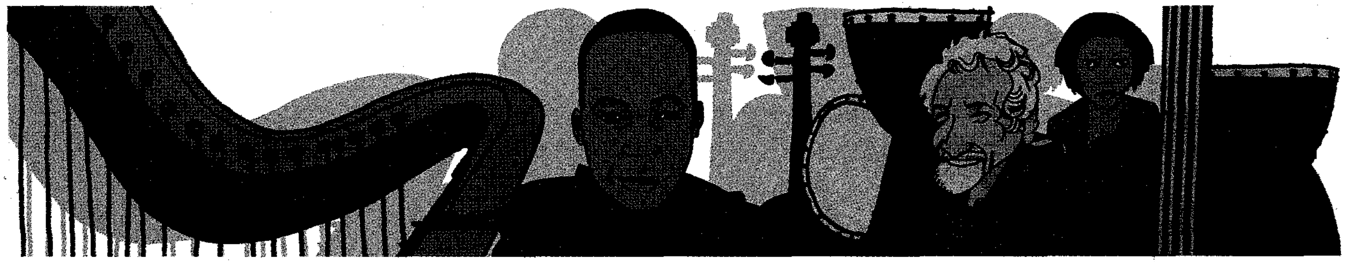
FELIPE GONZÁLEZ
The former Prime Minister of Spain, who led the government from 1982 to 1996, talks about his life, the early days of Spanish democracy, and momentous events that took place under his watch, including the country's entry into the European Union and the 1996 Olympics in Barcelona. (Instituto Cervantes, 211-215 E. 49th St. 212-308-7720. Dec. 16 at 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

CENTRAL PARK
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
This annual tally dates back to the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1900, an ornithologist named Frank Chapman organized the first holiday census to counter the then popular ritual of the "side hunt," in which a party would split into two groups and compete to bring home the most game. Twenty-seven like-minded souls across North America joined him that year, and the Christmas bird count has since grown into an important conservation tool that helps keep track of bird populations. Last year nearly a hundred volunteers turned out in Central Park, and fifty-six species were spotted, including an extremely rare boreal owl. Don't worry if you've never birded before: all are welcome, and even the resident pigeons need to be counted. (Dec. 18 at 8 A.M. For more information, call 212-360-1324.)

"UNSILENT NIGHT"
The avant-garde composer Phil Kline leads his annual holiday procession, which features a chorus of boom boxes playing his music through the streets of Greenwich Village. (Dec. 18 at 7, starting at the arch in Washington Square Park. For more information, call 212-227-6255.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
An exquisitely detailed Kirman carpet circa 1910 from southeast Iran, depicting the erotic Roman myth of Vertumnus and Pomona—an unusual amalgam of East and West—is the centerpiece of **Christie's** sale of European and Oriental carpets on Dec. 14. On Dec. 15, the house turns to the New World to auction a complete library set of Audubon's "Birds of America" (among other books and manuscripts), which is expected to bring up to seven million dollars; the entire contents of John W. Kluge's historic Morven residence, in Virginia, will be auctioned off on the following day. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** holds its own carpet sale on Dec. 16, featuring wonderful Karabagh, Kirman, and Kazak rugs, not to mention a mid-century Chinese tiger rug that resembles a filleted zebra. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Swann's** sale of Art Nouveau posters on Dec. 15 features dramatic (and high-priced) prints by Klimt and Mucha, among others. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)



JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
CRACKING WISE
Jan. 7-28

In 1940, Orson Welles chose Robert Wise to edit "Citizen Kane." In 1942, under orders from R.K.O., Wise recut Welles's "The Magnificent Ambersons" against the director's will. In 1943, R.K.O. launched Wise's directorial career, which included "West Side Story." MOMA presents films from Wise's career, including "Citizen Kane" and "The Set-Up," a boxing film noir from 1949 starring Robert Ryan. (212-708-9480.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OUT OF AFRICA
Jan. 20

"Focus on Africa," a three-day series at Miller Theatre, highlights the little-known world of African composition. It begins with a Composer Portrait of South Africa's Bongani Ndodana, offered by the soprano Dawn Padmore and Ensemble Noir. (212-854-7799.)

NIGHT LIFE
SURROUND SOUNDS
Jan. 21-22

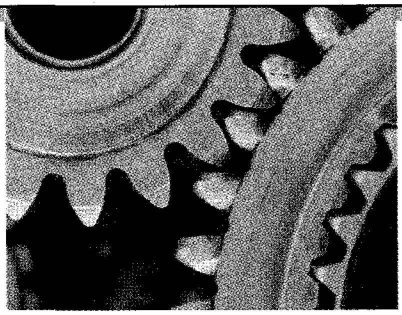
"Globalfest," the midwinter world-music gathering, returns for its third year. Now spread out over two nights, the festival's programming includes everything from Senegalese hip-hop (Daara J) to flamenco guitar (Juan Carmona) to Russian art rock (Auktyon), on three stages at the Public Theatre. (212-239-6200.)

THE THEATRE
BAREFOOTIN'
Jan. 24

The Cort Theatre will revive Neil Simon's 1963 romantic comedy, "Barefoot in the Park," a story about a charming pair of bickering newlyweds that was first a stage hit and then a film with Robert Redford and Jane Fonda. The revival of the play will star Amanda Peet, Patrick Wilson, Jill Clayburgh, and Tony Roberts. Isaac Mizrahi designed the costumes; Scott Elliott directs. (212-239-6200.)

ART
DOWN THE HUDSON
Feb. 9-April 30

The National Academy's "Treasures from Olana: Landscapes by Frederic Edwin Church" presents paintings, watercolors, and drawings from the artist's personal collection, which is currently housed in his former estate in Hudson, New York. (212-369-4880.)



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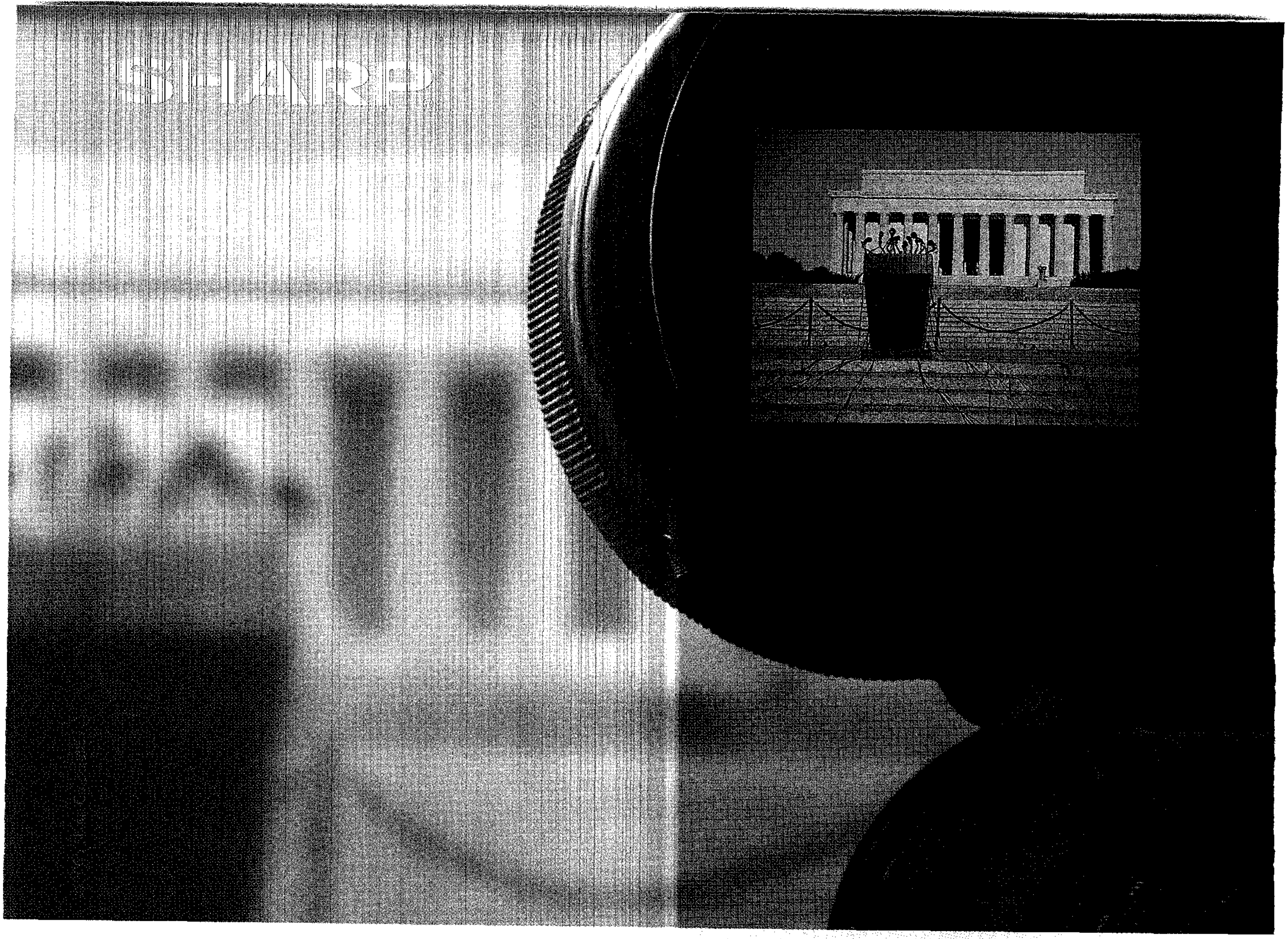

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BEHIND THE SCENES

VISUALIZING "THE WEST WING"

KENNETH HARDY, PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Responsible for "The West Wing's" *sets appeal, production designer Kenneth Hardy orchestrates the efforts of set decorators, a construction crew, and craftsmen to create the Sunday night drama's convincing atmospherics. The following conversation with Hardy provides an insider's perspective on the show and the impact of HDTV on the Emmy® Award-winning program's visuals. It is the final installment of this three-part Q&A series with creative forces behind the scenes.*

How much time do you get to prepare for a typical episode?

Hardy: We have eight days to prep, while we're simultaneously shooting another episode. Sometimes there's even less time to make government offices and buildings look believable and visually interesting at the same time.

What artifice do you use to make sets look authentic?

Hardy: I can start with a space that looks like nothing and introduce key items to make it feel real. In government there are certain seals and logos, types of graphics and furniture that help define a location. Warner Bros. has a library of painted backdrops that we used to place outside set windows. They used to be believable; now we almost always use photographic backgrounds because viewers with HDTV are likely to notice.

How do you use location to personify a character?

Hardy: We worked with [creator and writer] Aaron Sorkin early on in establishing background on all the characters. So in offices we have diplomas, awards, Photoshopped childhood pictures of characters or ones of them meeting a political leader, posters of marches they might have participated in. Some of that has accrued over the course of the series as we learn more about each character.

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Does the widescreen format affect your design choices?

Hardy: Absolutely. In choosing locations and sets, you learn to look at things differently, knowing you can cover close to 360 degrees, but there's not as much height. Switching to the widescreen format [in Season 3] was done with HDTV in mind, and it makes a difference in the look and feel of the show. It gives it a theatrical, cinematic quality since it has the proportions of a film screen.

How does knowing the show is seen in HDTV influence set design?

Hardy: HDTV has been a great defense and validation of my work. It's helped to keep the show looking as good as possible. It was easy to get away with things visually when people were watching a fuzzy screen on a 13-inch TV. That's no longer true. Many people are watching HDTV on flat screen TVs now. So there's no justification for not making sure everything looks as good as it can.

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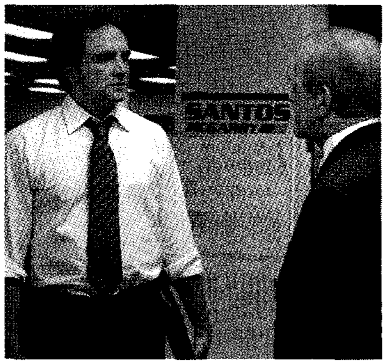

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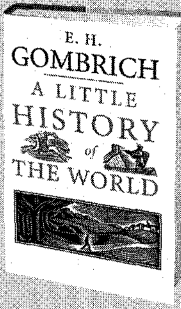
Wall Street Journal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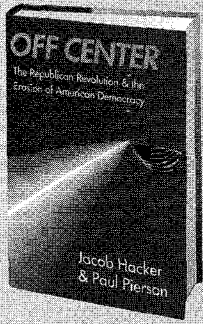
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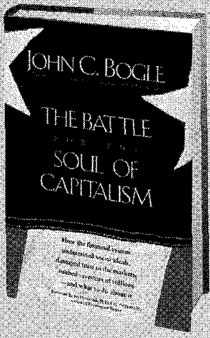
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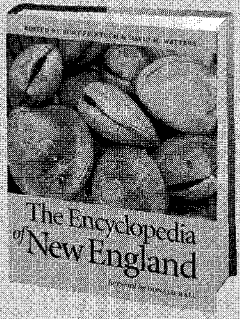
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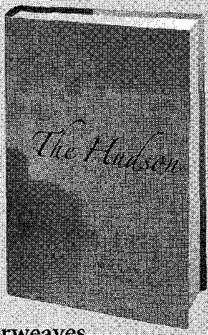

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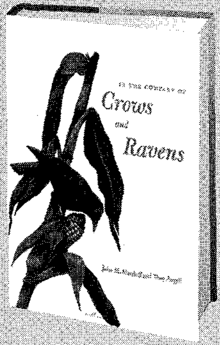
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
ON TRIAL

In Istanbul this Friday—in Şişli, the district where I have spent my whole life, in the courthouse directly opposite the three-story house where my grandmother lived alone for forty years—I will stand before a judge. My crime is to have "publicly denigrated Turkish identity." The prosecutor will ask that I be imprisoned for three years. I should perhaps find it worrying that the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was tried in the same court for the same offense, under Article 301 of the same statute, and was found guilty, but I remain optimistic. For, like my lawyer, I believe that the case against me is thin; I do not think I will end up in jail.

This makes it somewhat embarrassing to see my trial overdramatized. I am only too aware that most of the Istanbul friends from whom I have sought advice have at some point undergone much harsher interrogation and lost many years to court cases and prison sentences just because of a book, just because of something they had written. Living as I do in a country that honors its pashas, saints, and policemen at every opportunity but refuses to honor its writers until they have spent years in courts and in prisons, I cannot say I was surprised to be put on trial. I understand why friends smile and say that I am at last "a real Turkish writer." But when I uttered the words that landed me in trouble I was not seeking that kind of honor.

Last February, in an interview published in a Swiss newspaper, I said that "a million Armenians and thirty thousand Kurds had been killed in Turkey"; I went on to complain that it was taboo to discuss these matters in my country. Among the world's serious historians, it is common knowledge that a large number of Ottoman Armenians were deported, allegedly for siding against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, and many of them were slaughtered along the way. Turkey's spokesmen, most of whom are diplomats, continue to maintain that the death toll was much lower, that the slaughter does not count as a genocide because it was not systematic, and that in the course of the war Armenians killed many Muslims, too. This past September, however, despite opposition from the state, three highly respected Istanbul universities joined forces to hold an academic conference of scholars open to views not tolerated by the official Turkish line. Since then, for the first time in ninety years, there has been public discussion of the subject—this despite the spectre of Article 301.

GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL

LAURENT CILLUFFO

If the state is prepared to go to such lengths to keep the Turkish people from knowing what happened to the Ottoman Armenians, that qualifies as a taboo. And my words caused a furor worthy of a taboo: various newspapers launched hate campaigns against me, with some right-wing (but not necessarily Islamist) columnists going as far as to say that I should be "silenced" for good; groups of nationalist extremists organized meetings and demonstrations to protest my treachery; there were public burnings of my books. Like Ka, the hero of my novel "Snow," I discovered how it felt to have to leave one's beloved city for a time on account of one's political views. Because I did not want to add to the controversy, and did not want even to hear about it, I at first kept quiet, drenched in a strange sort of shame, hiding from the public, and even from my own words. Then a provincial governor ordered a burning of my books, and, following my return to Istanbul, the Şişli public prosecutor opened the

"Maybe nobody goes to your Web site because it's about you."

case against me, and I found myself the object of international concern.

My detractors were not motivated just by personal animosity, nor were they expressing hostility to me alone; I already knew that my case was a matter worthy of discussion in both Turkey and the outside world. This was partly because I believed that what stained a country's "honor" was not the discussion of the black spots in its history but the impossibility of any discussion at all. But it was also because I believed that in today's Turkey the prohibition against discussing the Ottoman Armenians was a prohibition against freedom of expression, and that the two matters were inextricably linked. Comforted as I was by the interest in my predicament and by the generous gestures of support, there were also times when I felt uneasy about finding myself caught between my country and the rest of the world.

The hardest thing was to explain why a country officially committed to entry in the European Union would wish to imprison an author whose books were well known in Europe, and why it felt compelled to play out this drama (as Conrad might have said) "under Western eyes." This paradox cannot be explained away as simple ignorance, jealousy, or intolerance, and it is not the only paradox. What am I to make of a country that insists that the Turks, unlike their Western neighbors, are a compassionate people, incapable of genocide, while nationalist political groups are pelting me with death threats? What is the logic behind a state that complains that its enemies spread false reports about the Ottoman legacy all over the globe while it prosecutes and imprisons one writer after another, thus propagating the image of the Terrible Turk worldwide? When I think of the professor whom the state asked to give his ideas on Turkey's minorities, and who, having produced a report that failed to please, was prosecuted, or the news that between the time I began this essay and embarked on the sentence you are now reading five more writers and journalists were charged under Article 301, I imagine that Flaubert and Nerval, the two godfathers of Orientalism, would call these incidents *bizarreries*, and rightly so.

That said, the drama we see unfolding is not, I think, a grotesque and inscrutable drama peculiar to Turkey; rather, it is an expression of a new global phenomenon that we are only just coming to acknowledge and that we must now begin, however slowly, to address. In recent years, we have witnessed the astounding economic rise of India and China, and in both these countries we have also seen the rapid expansion of the middle class, though I do not think we shall truly understand the people who have been part of this transformation until we have seen their private lives reflected in novels. Whatever you call these new élites—the non-Western bourgeoisie or the enriched bureaucracy—they, like the Westernizing élites in my own country, feel compelled to follow two separate and seemingly incompatible lines of action in order to legitimatize their newly acquired wealth and power. First, they must justify the rapid rise in their fortunes by assuming the idiom and the attitudes of the West; having created a demand for such knowledge, they then take it upon themselves to tutor their countrymen. When the people berate them for ignoring tradition, they respond by brandishing a virulent and intolerant nationalism. The disputes that a Flaubert-like outside observer might call *bizarreries* may simply be the clashes between these political and economic programs and the cultural aspirations they engender. On the one hand, there is the rush to join the global economy; on the other, the angry nationalism that sees true democracy and freedom of thought as Western inventions.

V. S. Naipaul was one of the first writers to describe the private lives of the ruthless, murderous non-Western ruling élites of the post-colonial era. Last May, in Korea, when I met the great Japanese writer Kenzaburo Oe, I heard that he, too, had been attacked by nationalist extremists after stating that the ugly crimes committed by his country's armies during the invasions of Korea and China should be openly discussed in Tokyo. The intolerance shown by the Russian state toward the Chechens and other minorities and civil-rights groups, the attacks on freedom of expression by Hindu nationalists in India, and China's discreet ethnic cleansing of the Uighurs—all are nourished by the same contradictions.

As tomorrow's novelists prepare to narrate the private lives of the new élites, they are no doubt expecting the West to criticize the limits that their states place on freedom of expression. But these days the lies about the war in Iraq and the reports of secret C.I.A. prisons have so damaged the West's credibility in Turkey and in other nations that it is more and more difficult for people like me to make the case for true Western democracy in my part of the world.

—*Orhan Pamuk*

(*Translated, from the Turkish, by Maureen Freely.*)

FIELD STUDIES
JOHN Q. GOTHAM

According to Kevin O'Keefe, whose new book, "The Average American," chronicles his hunt for the most statistically typical person in the United States, the average American drives a car (eight years old, no vanity plates) and owns a home (permanent, freestanding, occupied by 2.62 people, with a washing machine, a dryer, an outdoor grill, and a private lawn requiring forty hours a year of mowing). He lives within fifty miles of the town where he grew up, has a listed phone number, and is regularly in bed before midnight. Fine enough for most of the country. But what about the average New Yorker?

To investigate this question, O'Keefe agreed, on a recent drizzly afternoon, to devise a sort of city census. His first stop was what passes, around here, for heartland—a Starbucks in Times Square. "O.K., let's start with what we know," O'Keefe said, poring over a sheaf of government records. "The average New Yorker has no owner-occupied dwelling, no car." O'Keefe's formula for pinpointing averageness is as follows: find statistics that reflect majority preferences and apply them to a given population, winnowing the pool until only one candidate remains—a perfect match. For his nationwide survey, he explained, he used only "affirmative" factors (for example, having a household pet, eating ice cream at least once a month) as criteria for advancement; no one could be advanced for something he or she didn't have or hadn't done. It was pointed out that, in New York, not having things is the norm. "In that case, let's do 'commute by bus or subway,'" O'Keefe said. "That will eliminate a lot of people in Queens who drive."

Another tenet of the O'Keefe method is subject participation, which makes for a demographic portrait that is distinctly bottom-up. "I decided that I would only be led to future criteria by people I met during my journey," he writes. Like many people given to tropes of questing and conversion, O'Keefe, a former marketing executive who lives in Murray Hill, was once unhappy with his life, which he approached, he writes, "with the blinders on toward maximum performance." He says that he wrote the book to overcome his fear of the average. (The project could also be seen as an elaborate apologia: O'Keefe, who is forty-four years old, recently married and is planning a move to the suburbs.) "I don't mind going to barbecues anymore. I associated them with being dull, and that's not the case," he said. "I really love the everyday." To the streets, then.

After a brief study of the statistics, it was decided that, along with not owning a home or a car, the average New Yorker would be single (56.6 per cent), live in a building that has more than ten units (53.9 per cent) and that was built before 1960 (67.2 per cent), and have been born in a different state (50.5 per cent). O'Keefe approached a woman who was distributing handbills for a Bill Buckner appearance, outside ESPN Zone. A married, car-driving, homeowning woman from Staten Island, it turned out. Zero for six. In Bryant Park, O'Keefe homed in on a man in a polyester zip-up jacket. "He looks foreign, so that will at least get 'born out of state,'" O'Keefe reasoned. "How could I be the average New Yorker?" the man said. "I am Spanish. And I live in New Jersey."

Several feet away, a man was working on a laptop. He was a doctor, on his day off. O'Keefe began his questionnaire. Homeowner? "Naw, pssh. Not yet." Car? "No." Single? "Yes. Heterosexual." "That wasn't on my list, but thanks," O'Keefe said.

After Bryant Park, O'Keefe decided to try the No. 6 train. Few willing subjects there ("I can't right now"; "I don't speak English"; "I live on a cruise ship"), but plenty of bucket-seat philosophizing about what makes an average New Yorker. "A lot of New Yorkers go to restaurants and movies, living about as lazy a life as possible," one man said. O'Keefe disembarked at Eighty-sixth Street, where a couple waiting for a bus were counted out, on the basis of marriage, but weighed in, anyway, on what New Yorkers have in common. "Al Wilson's cousin, remember, dear, went to a very fine college in California, went on to medical school, and she came to visit—this was twenty, twenty-five years ago—and said that we really are much more hip here." A man who said he was

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HEADLINES FROM THE BAGHDAD DAILY BUGLE

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FEW CHANGES NEEDED TO TURN ABU GHRAIB INTO AN APPLEBEE'S

VOTING MACHINES FOR UPCOMING ELECTIONS DONATED BY FLORIDA

NEW AUTOMATIC CITIZENSHIP LAW TURNS U.S. FORCES INTO CRACK IRAQI ARMY OVERNIGHT

BAGHDAD WINS CONTEST FOR "WORLD'S NOISIEST CITY"

DEATHS FROM ELECTRIC SHOCKS REACH ALL-TIME BAGHDAD LOW

HOMEMAKER HINTS: SHELL CASING MAKES FINE UMBRELLA STAND, LOVING CUP, TOILET

SPRUCE UP THE SPIDERHOLE FOR RAMADAN

TRAFFIC MISHAPS PLUMMET AS STREETS DISAPPEAR

BUSH TO ALL IRAQIS: "MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

—Bruce McCall

homeless and separated offered a different profile: "I think the average New Yorker is probably a sports fan, drinks beer, and more than likely works. He's probably blue collar. He has an excellent, upbeat attitude."

O'Keefe continued up Lexington, turning east on Ninetieth Street. He began interrogating a jogger, who was disqualified (homeowner) but nonetheless launched into a complicated real-estate/divorce narrative. "I would've had this great house, three bedrooms, a block from the ocean," he said. The story sounded pretty familiar.

Farther down the block, two men, Sam and Bert, were passing the time. Sam was sitting on a siamese hose connection, reading the *Times* and smoking a cigarette. No car, no home, no wife, he said. So far, so good. "Do you take public transportation?" O'Keefe asked.

"Hardly," Sam answered. "I have a driver."

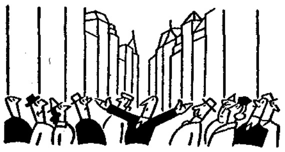
"You should see the car he has his driver pick him up in," Bert said. "A black limo."

"Yeah, but I used to take public transportation," Sam said. Sam seemed to have got the idea that this was a contest he could win. "I think it's me," he said. He made an offer. "Come on, I'll give up my car for one week!"

One could conclude that the average New Yorker has a hard time believing that he's not exceptional.

—*Lauren Collins*

MEAN STREETS DEPT.
CYBER CITY



Typically, video games are set in places with names like Myst, Zanarkand, and, slightly less fantastically, Vice City. True Crime: New York City, which was released last month by Activision and is being advertised on billboards around town, is set in Manhattan. While it is not the first game to take place in a real-world location (or even in New York), True Crime: New York City's attempt to accurately re-create an existing place is unprecedented in scope and ambition. (It is more complex, by several orders of magnitude, than its predecessor, True Crime: Streets of L.A.) To design True Crime's virtual city, six location scouts walked the borough of Manhattan with maps and digital cameras, taking photographs of practically every intersection and major landmark. Through the use of proprietary 3-D imaging software, the resulting eleven thousand images were transformed into a coherent representation of the entire island. "We tried to make it a real living, breathing city," Simon Ebejer, an Activision producer, said.

The question of whether the game's designers succeeded was put, one recent afternoon, to two professional tour guides: Paul Rush, who leads independent sightseeing groups, and Seth Kamil, the founder of Big Onion Walking Tours. Both have extensive knowledge of the history and culture of New York City; neither had any experience with video games. Within minutes of taking command of True Crime's protagonist, an undercover detective named Marcus, Kamil had wrapped his vehicle around a lamppost ("one of the fancy ones Giuliani put in to beautify the city," he noted), and then, after venturing forth on foot, he inadvertently got into a fatal gun battle with a uniformed officer. It was decided that the game's controls would be turned over to an observer, who would follow Kamil and Rush's directions.

The initial response of both licensed tour guides was pleasant surprise. "That's not terrible," Kamil said when he got his first glimpse of digitalized Stuyvesant Town. "The scaffolding is perfect. That's as right as it gets." Zipping from neighborhood to neighborhood (the absence of traffic is the most unrealistic aspect of the landscape), the guides were impressed by the attention paid to small details: the hexagonal paving stones in Central Park; the counterfeit-Rolex dealers along Broadway; the yellow sidewalk boxes of the Gotham Writers' Workshop, and the way they all seemed to be stuffed with trash.

Soon enough, however, they began to nitpick. "There is a church on this site, but it looks absolutely nothing like the building that they're showing here," Kamil said, clucking at the transformation of humble St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, on Tenth Street, into what he called a "Batmanesque" Gothic cathedral. "The thing that strikes me most is the lack of street life," Rush said. "It looks like downtown Los Angeles." Marcus tried hailing a taxi in the traditional video-game manner: firing his service revolver twice into the air. The driver hopped out; she was wearing shorts and a midriff-baring top. Kamil squinted at the screen. "I gotta be honest," he said. "It's been a very long time since I've seen a cabdriver that good-looking."

A quick turn onto a three-lane roadway in the financial district elicited a typical exchange:

"Wouldn't you love to see Beaver Street that empty?"

"And that wide!"

"That's a one-lane, narrow street."

"It was laid out in 1626."

Back on foot, Marcus bumped into a pedestrian who bore a passing resemblance to Tony Soprano. The man responded, "Hey, pay attention, asshole!"

Kamil sighed. "That's what most Americans think of New Yorkers," he said. They observed that the game pandered to out-of-towners' stereotypes in other ways—piles of garbage, ubiquitous graffiti, and boarded-up windows in even the best neighborhoods. Ebejer, the producer, confirmed this. "We took a little bit of creative license and made the city grittier and dirtier than it is in real life," he said, "because that's the common perception of what New York City is."

The guides noticed more peculiarities. Somehow, practically every statue in the city—George M. Cohan, in

TOM BACHTELL

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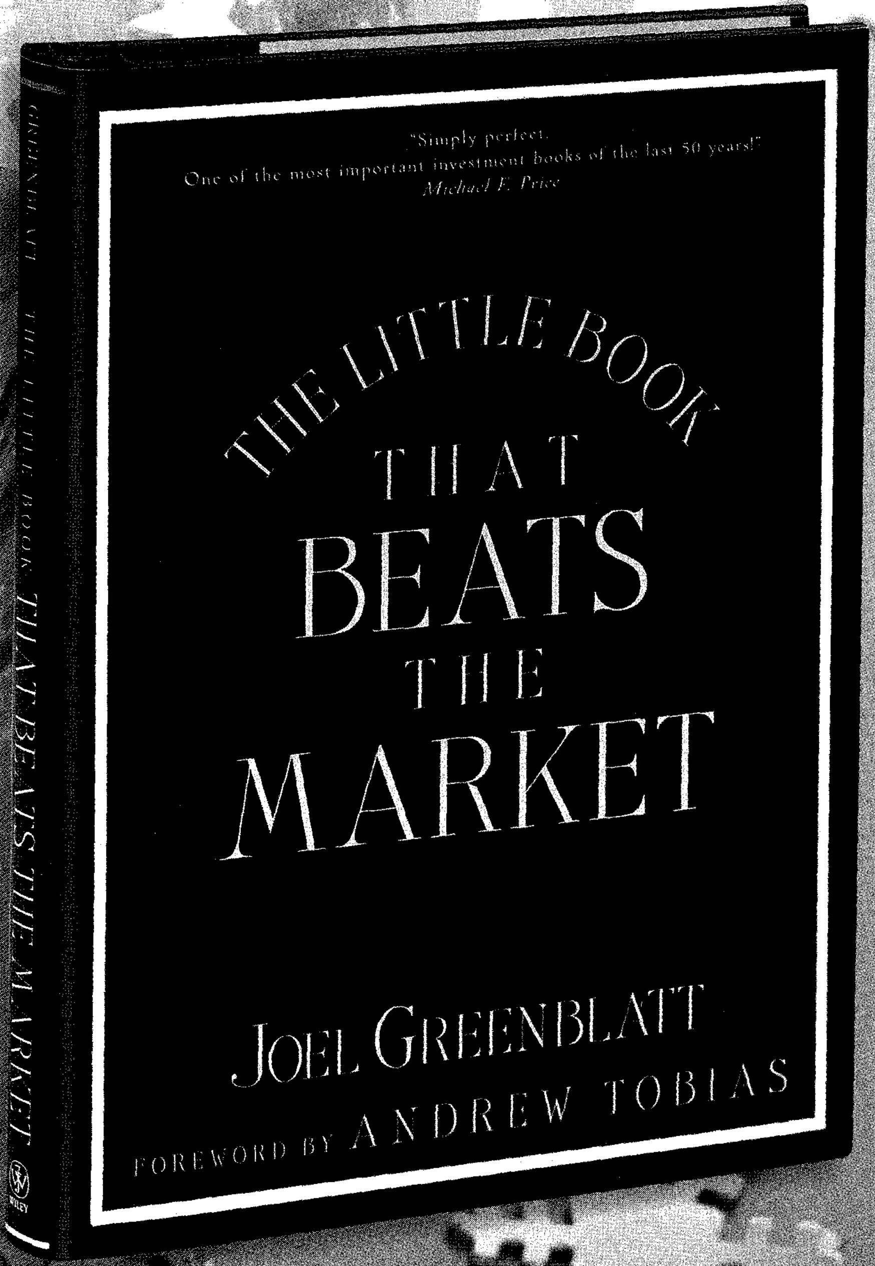
—*Financial Times*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Once the photos were released, the supervisors at Abu Ghraib **obviously couldn't** keep their jobs. So they were promoted.

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Duffy Square; the Maine Memorial, in Columbus Circle; Hans Christian Andersen, in Central Park—seemed to have become George Washington being sworn in on the steps of Federal Hall. The only place the guides couldn't find him was on the steps of Federal Hall, because Federal Hall itself was missing. A quick check identified additional absentee landmarks, including the Apollo Theatre, the Intrepid, and New Jersey. (True Crime's Battery Park City has fabulous views of the open ocean.)

Kamil and Rush ended their virtual tour in Times Square, where Marcus came face to face with one final landmark: a long-haired man dressed only in a cowboy hat, boots, and tight white briefs, strumming a guitar. Suddenly, an obvious thought intruded on the afternoon's experiment—the fun of a simulation like True Crime: New York City is not that it re-creates the city perfectly but that it re-creates the city just well enough to allow a player to have adventures that are forbidden in real life.

A few buttons on the controller were jabbed in rapid succession, and Marcus swung hard at the figure with the guitar. A few more jabs and a switch to Tae Kwon Do mode, and the Naked Cowboy was on his hands and knees, moaning and trying to crawl away. A final press of a button brought a hail of gunfire. "Now, that is a nice touch," Rush declared.

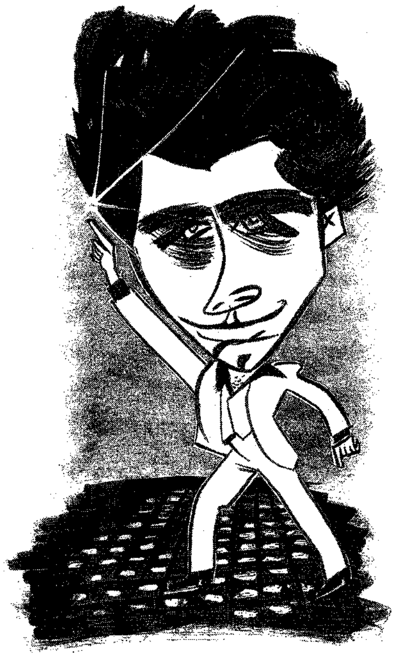
—*Daniel Radosh*

ON THE BLOCK

ODYSSEY 2005

Earlier this year, a memorabilia company called Profiles in History offered for auction the dance floor used in "Saturday Night Fever." Profiles, which is based in Beverly Hills, has handled plenty of major sales—Al Pacino's fedora from "The Godfather," Clint Eastwood's carbine rifle from "Rawhide," the original "Star Wars" light sabres. Still, the company was unprepared for the chaos that erupted over this particular lot. "It was absolute pandemonium," Joseph Maddalena, the company's president, said. "People were phoning us day and night, and we received bids from all around the world."

One interested party, a visitor to a message board for fans of the movie, wrote, "Damn, I would love to have that. But then I think, where the heck would I put it?" Another post was beseeching. "DEAR BUYER OF THE FLOOR: if you find a VERY dusty drop-ball earring, please contact me. No questions asked." Eventually, the lot was awarded to an anonymous bidder for $188,800. But there was one problem: a Brooklyn man named Vito Bruno had filed a lawsuit claiming that he was the dance floor's rightful owner.



"I'm a disco bunny," Bruno said the other day, sitting in his office, on the first floor of a brownstone in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Bruno, who is forty-nine, got his start in the industry by working the door at Odyssey 2001, the night club (later renamed Spectrum) featured in the movie. At age twenty, he became its manager. "I had a big, Guido'd hair thing," he said. He gestured to a framed photograph of himself and Cher. "Like all moths, you're drawn to the spotlight."

One Sunday, a few months before the Profiles auction, Bruno was flipping through the *Times* classifieds. He came across an ad announcing the on-site "absolute auction" of the contents of 802 Sixty-fourth Street, in Brooklyn—Odyssey 2001's old address. Along with Crown amps, turntables, and bar sinks, the ad described one item Bruno had to have: the "original Saturday Night Fever dance floor."

The next day, Bruno called Spectrum's owner, Joseph (Jay) Rizzo, to see if he would consider making a private side deal to sell the floor—a three-hundred-and-eighty-square-foot slab of transparent Plexiglas, lit from below by hundreds of flashing, colored bulbs. "He said he wanted half a yard, meaning fifty thousand dollars, to take it off the block," Bruno said. He declined.

Bruno decided instead to try his luck at the auction in Brooklyn. After dispatching some of the d.j. equipment and unopened liquor inventory, the auctioneer moved on to the dance floor, for which, it turned out, Bruno was the only bidder. "I bid up to six thousand dollars when the auctioneer says, 'Stop bidding, item withdrawn.' " Bruno approached Rizzo to see what the problem was. " 'I'm busy' is what he said," Bruno remembers. " 'Call me another day.' So I call him another day and he says, 'I'm not *giving* it away.' " (Rizzo maintains that he withdrew the floor before any bids were placed.)

In Bruno's lawsuit, which is now being heard in a Kings County court, he argues that the auctioneer's withdrawal of the dance floor violated the legal rules of an absolute auction, which mandate that an item must be sold to the highest bidder, no matter how low his bid. And, for the moment, a Brooklyn judge has granted a preliminary injunction that prevents Rizzo from packing up the floor—which is being held in a Staten Island storage facility—and sending it to the winner of the Profiles auction.

Bruno, who is now managing recording artists (he has represented, among others, Crystal Waters and 2-5, 50 Cent's cousin), said that his wish to own the floor is both sentimentally and financially motivated. "It's part of history, part of me growing up," he said. "But, as a businessman, I know what to do with something like that. Most people in the entertainment business, disco ain't cool to them. They gotta understand: the Bee Gees sold thirty-seven million records to *somebody*."

—*Andrea Walker*

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LIFE AND LETTERS

BECOMING MARY POPPINS

P. L. Travers, Walt Disney, and the making of a myth.

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

The 1964 world première of "Mary Poppins" was held at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, and it was the kind of spectacle for which the Disney organization had become famous. Throngs of screaming fans were greeted by Mickey Mouse, Goofy, Snow White and the dwarfs, as well as by entertainers who gestured toward the movie's Edwardian setting: a twelve-piece pearly band, chimney-sweep dancers, valets dressed as bobbies, and a bevy of pretty Disneyland hostesses, whose traditional uniforms (kilts and black velvet riding helmets) suggested a general Englishness. Hollywood luminaries arrived in chauffeured automobiles, the women in ball gowns and mink stoles (Angie Dickinson, Maureen O'Hara, Suzanne Pleshette), the men wearing dinner jackets (Edward G. Robinson, Cesar Romero, Buddy Ebsen). The arrival of the movie's principals aroused muted excitement: Julie Andrews, who played Mary Poppins, had never appeared in a movie before, and Dick Van Dyke—the chimney sweep Bert—became much better known after the film's release. Then Walt Disney himself arrived, stepping out of a stretch limousine and gallantly reaching a hand into the car to help his wife, Lillian, onto the pavement. Disney was by then immensely famous, appearing on his own television show every Sunday night. He had carefully engineered his entrance: when his car pulled up, the Disney characters mobbed it, and soon afterward clouds of balloons were released into the air.

Inside the packed twelve-hundred-seat theatre, the members of the audience responded to the movie with enthusiasm: they gave it a five-minute standing ovation. In the midst of the celebrating crowd, it would have been easy to overlook the sixty-five-year-old woman sitting there, weeping. Anyone who recognized her as P. L. Travers, the author of the Mary Poppins books, could have been forgiven for assuming that her tears were the product either of artistic delight or of financial ecstasy (she owned five per cent of the gross; the movie made her rich). Neither was the case. The picture, she thought, had done a strange kind of violence to her work. She would turn the personally disastrous première into a hilarious dining-out story, with Disney as the butt of her jokes. But she had a premonition that the movie she hated was about to change everything for her. Writing to a friend, she remarked that her life would never be the same.

Travers's dreams of becoming a famous writer were realized because of Disney's movie, but its scope eclipsed everything else that she had or would achieve. She spent the rest of her long life (she died in 1996, at the age of ninety-six) linked artistically and personally to Mary Poppins. It was a persona—spinsterish children's author, creator of a spinsterish character—that overshadowed the more complicated identity she had devoted her life to creating. The movie also left a deep impression on the generations of children who saw it during its three theatrical releases, in 1964, 1973, and 1980. These were children who grew up in an America in which nannies were as unfamiliar to middle-class neighborhoods as Jaguars and Martians. But they would become adults in an America that had invented a new nanny culture. To an astonishing extent, the way they came to think and talk about their employees was shaped by the movie they had seen so many years earlier.

Nannies have become a force in American life because of the three-decade-long influx of middle-class mothers to the workforce, and the more recent wave of cheap female immigrant labor. "She's the Guatemalan Mary Poppins!" a working mother will happily announce of her new employee—or the Colombian or the Caribbean one. It's hard to find a book or an article about hiring a nanny that doesn't make mention of the old girl. And even though the culture and experience of a Third World child-care provider are as removed from those of an Edwardian nanny as it is possible to be, we understand what the reference means: the nanny is good, she's kind, and her ability to transform a chaotic household into a place of order and contentment verges on the supernatural. What people remember about the movie is that the family finds happiness and the nanny is magical. What they misremember is that it's a film with a surprising moral: fire the nanny. In a sense, "Mary Poppins" is an anti-nanny propaganda film, the "Reefer Madness" of the working-mother set.

Julie Andrews, Walt Disney, and P. L. Travers in 1964.

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The script for "Mary Poppins" was written by a group of men in Burbank in the early sixties, and it is set in London in 1910, in the household of a martinet banker (Mr. Banks), a suffragette (Mrs. Banks), and their two young children, Jane and Michael. But the Bankses' story opens with an entirely contemporary predicament: a mother with tons of work being blindsided by a crisis more terrifying to the maternal soul than infidelity or financial reversal—nanny trouble. When first we meet Mrs. Banks, she is dancing along the pavement outside her house, triumphant in her day's accomplishments. "We had the most glorious meeting," she tells her servants, after she bursts through the front door, singing. "Mrs. Whitbourne-Allen chained herself to the wheel of the Prime Minister's carriage. You should have been there! And Mrs. Ainslie—she was carried off to prison, singing and scattering pamphlets all the way!" The servants, however, have news of their own: the reason that Katie Nanna, the children's nursemaid, is wearing her gabardine travelling outfit is that she is about to quit. They finally manage to tell Mrs. Banks, and it is as though they'd stuck a pin in her; we watch her crumple before our eyes. She snatches off her "Votes for Women" sash—"You know how the cause infuriates Mr. Banks"—and then does what any clear-thinking, intelligent woman in her situation would do: she begs. "Katie Nanna—I beseech you. Please reconsider. Think of the children. Think of Mr. Banks." Speak of the devil—he marches through the door, and becomes apoplectic when he learns of the upheaval. In six minutes of film time, Mrs. Banks is changed from a balls-out feminist—"No more the meek and mild subservients, we!"—to a surrendered wife. "I'm sorry, dear," she says. "I'll try to do better next time."

What follows is the entirety of what most people remember of the film: Mary Poppins alights calmly from the sky, using her umbrella as a parachute, and begins to set things straight. Her main objective is to transform Mr. Banks from a prig to a loving mid-century American-style dad, with a hankering for kiddie fun and family time. But she's got half an eye on the missus. By the movie's end, Mrs. Banks has abandoned the whole crazy suffrage scheme, and proves it by using her "Votes for Women" sash as a tail for the children's kite. As Mary Poppins slips away, Mrs. Banks goes to the park with her family, embracing her proper role in the household. The story's happy ending depends on a signal fact: the Banks children will no longer be brought up by servants. Henceforth, their own mother—corralled homeward through the beneficent intercessions of Mary Poppins—will do the job herself.

"Mary Poppins" advocates the kind of family life that Walt Disney had spent his career both chronicling and helping to foster on a national level: father at work, mother at home, children flourishing. It is tempting to imagine that in Travers he found a like-minded person, someone who embodied the virtues of conformity and traditionalism. Nothing could be further from the truth. Travers was a woman who never married, wore trousers when she felt like it, had a transformative and emotionally charged relationship with an older married man, and entered into a long-term live-in relationship with another woman. As she approached forty, she decided that she wanted a child. After a bizarre incident in which she attempted to adopt the seventeen-year-old girl who cleaned her house, she travelled to Ireland and adopted an infant, one of a pair of twins, and raised him as a single mother. Her reverence for the delights of family life was perhaps as intense as Disney's, but her opinion about the shape such a life might assume was far more nuanced.

Children's authors are not known for their happy childhoods, and Helen Goff—the little girl who at twenty-one changed her name to Pamela Travers and never looked back—endured one that was almost archetypal in its sadness and its privations. She was born in Australia in 1899, the eldest daughter in a household of girls. Her father, Travers Goff, was a bank manager and a drinker, and he died when she was seven. Valerie Lawson, the author of the only comprehensive biography of Pamela Travers, notes that "epileptic seizure delirium" was given as the cause of death, but says Pamela Travers "always believed the underlying cause was sustained, heavy drinking." Her mother, Margaret, who was pretty and feckless, soldiered on for a few years, and then, when Helen was ten, she did what a mother is never supposed to do. She gave up.

One night, in the middle of a thunderstorm, Margaret left Helen in charge of the two younger children, telling her that she was going to drown herself in a nearby creek. As an old woman, Travers wrote about the terrifying experience: "Large-eyed, the little ones looked at me—she and I called them the little ones, both of us aware that an eldest child, no matter how young, can never experience the heart's ease that little ones enjoy." Helen stirred the fire and then they all lay down on the hearth rug and she told them a story about a magical flying horse, with the small ones asking excited questions ("Could he carry us to the shiny land, all three on his back?"). As she tried to distract her siblings, she worried about the future. She later wrote, "What happens to children who have lost both parents? Do they go into Children's Homes and wear embroidered dressing-gowns, embroidery that is really darning?" That predicament—the fate of children whose parents can't take care of them—haunted her for the rest of her life.

Margaret came back that night, having been unsuccessful in her suicide attempt, but Helen's mind was made up. She no longer cleaved to her unreliable, dithering mother but, rather, to a formidable maiden great-aunt, Helen Morehead. Aunt Ellie, as she was called, bossed everyone around, but her fierceness disguised a kindness she would have been embarrassed to admit.

If it was possible to be a rebellious teen-ager in the girls' schools of Sydney in the nineteen-tens, then Travers was one. She studied elocution and eventually joined a travelling Shakespeare company, playing the role of Lorenzo in "The Merchant of Venice." She wrote for the Christchurch *Sun*, and for the literary magazine *The Triad*, where she was the author of a saucy column called "A Woman Hits Back" and often published her erotic ruminations. (Travers, inviting her readers to imagine her taking off her underwear: "The silky hush of intimate things, fragrant with my fragrance, steal softly down, so loth to rob me of my last dear concealment.") She was loose-limbed and boyish—no beauty—but her phenomenal self-regard and quick, vicious wit drew attention. By 1924, she had decided that she had outgrown the antipodes, and bought a ticket on a passenger ship of the White Star Line bound for Southampton, hoping to make her fame and fortune as a writer in London.

Once there, Travers found work as a journalist, filing stories for the *Sun* and eventually writing theatre reviews. Fleet Street was a man's world, and she was a man's girl. Flirtatious, charming, smart, unmarried, and a welcome addition to the convivial pub scene, she had the bounder's willingness to press her work on anyone who might help her, and when her submission of poems to the *Irish Statesman* was met with a promising letter from its editor, the poet George Russell—known as A.E.—she went to Dublin to see him. A.E., a married man of fifty-six, was a reckless encourager of young people. His literary connections extended from the house next door—the Dublin home of Yeats—to New York and the Continent, and he offered them all to Travers. A theosophist, he urged her to take up the study of mysticism, which became a lifelong preoccupation. They began a relationship that was filial, intellectual, and marked by romantic gestures. It lasted until his death, ten years later.

The most important of A.E.'s introductions, however, was not profes-

PLANTING THE ALDER

For the bark, dulled argent, roundly wrapped
And pigeon-collared.

For the splitter-splatter, guttering
Rain-flirt leaves.

For the snub and clot of the first green cones,
Smelted emerald, chlorophyll.

For the scut and scat of cones in winter,
So rattle-skinned, so fossil-brittle.

For the alder wood, flame-red when torn
Branch from branch.

But mostly for the swinging locks
Of yellow catkins,

Plant it, plant it,
Streel-head in the rain.

—*Seamus Heaney*

sional. He had a hunch that Travers would take a liking to another single girl living in London, Madge Burnand, the daughter of one of his friends, the former editor of *Punch*. The two women hit it off immediately. In 1931, they set up housekeeping in a cottage in Sussex. Madge did the cooking, while Pamela wrote poems for the *Irish Statesman*, and essays for the *New English Weekly*, where she later served on the board with T. S. Eliot. It was there, in the winter of 1933, that she succumbed to a bout of pleurisy, took to her bed, and began to write.

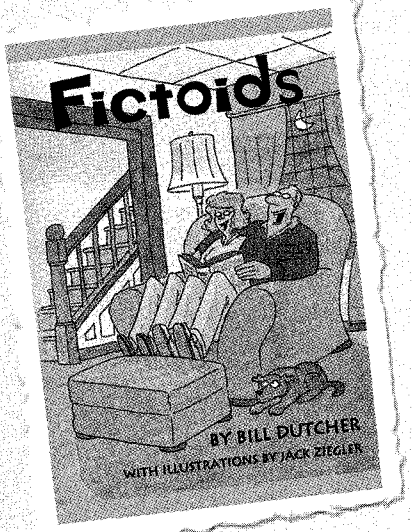
Travers chose as her subject one of the great English preoccupations: nursery life. More to the point, within that subject she located a rich and relatively untapped vein of experience—the relationship between a nanny and her charges. Travers was writing at the end of a groundbreaking epoch of children's literature that included the works of Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame, J. M. Barrie, and A. A. Milne, each of them annexing vast territories of children's experience. Several years earlier, Travers had published a newspaper short about a comical nanny named Mary Poppins. More recently, A.E.—whose advice usually succeeded only in making her bad poetry worse—had given her an inspired suggestion: he thought that she should write a story about a witch. Now the idea struck her: why not make Mary Poppins into a shape-shifter?

We tend to think of the British nanny—formally trained, bred to the job, imperious, unflappable, and immaculately turned out—as one of England's oldest traditions. She was actually a relatively short-lived institution. Born in the early days of Victoria's reign, when industrialization and a population explosion among both the poor and the middle class brought the two groups together in a highly regimented and hierarchical servant culture, she had all but disappeared by the end of the Second World War. The middle-class house that was populated with specialized servants became a thing of the past, and nannies evolved into an accoutrement strictly of upper-class life, associated with the aristocracy.

Travers's story, which unfolded over the course of an eventual eight books, is set in Depression-era London, and describes a world in decline. The Banks family, though solidly middle class, is racked with financial anxieties, and possessed of "the smallest house in the Lane," which is "rather dilapidated and needs a coat of paint." Nonetheless, they have a retinue of servants: "Mrs. Brill to cook for them, and Ellen to lay the tables, and Robertson Ay to cut the lawn and clean the knives and polish the shoes and, as Mr. Banks always said, 'to waste his time and my money,' " as well as a nurse, Katie Nanna, for their four children. Mrs. Banks keeps busy running the household, going to tea, and, when she can, putting her feet up. Mr. Banks works at a bank.

Obviously, Travers did not write her books to commemorate a happy childhood, but she did seem interested in rewriting her bad one. The Banks family is a reformed version of the Goffs, their charming features magnified and their failures burnished away. Father is a banker, although not a drunk; mother is a flibbertigibbet, although not a suicidal one. And Mary Poppins, like Aunt Ellie, is the great deflater, the enemy of any attempt at whimsy or sentiment. (" 'I smell snow,' said Jane as they got out of the Bus. 'I smell Christmas trees,' said Michael. 'I smell fried fish,' said Mary Poppins.") But she is also an everyday enchantress, a woman who will scold a child for wearing a coat in a warm room but also one who will take her charges to a midnight congress of animals at the zoo, and on an afternoon trip around the world.

The literary Mary Poppins is by no means an untroubling character. Indeed, at the end of the first chapter of the first book—in which she arrives as a shape hurled against the front door in the midst of a gale, assumes the form of a woman, bullies Mrs. Banks into hiring her, snaps at the children, and doses them with a mysterious potion after she gets them alone in the nursery—she earns only a qualified endorsement: "And although they sometimes found themselves wishing for the quieter, more ordinary days when Katie Nanna ruled the household, everybody, on the whole, was glad of Mary Pop-



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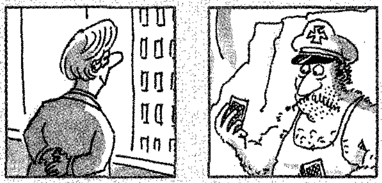

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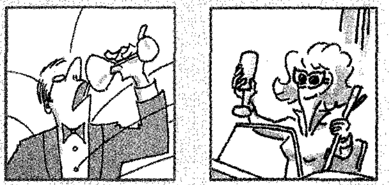

pins's arrival." She is, in fact, very often "angry," "threatening," "scornful," and "frightening." She calls the children cannibals, jostles them down the stairs, and makes them eat so quickly that they fear they will choke. She has a habit of saving the children from horrifying supernatural experiences, it's true, but this would seem more of a boon if she herself hadn't brought them on in revenge for naughtiness. Often, she seems like someone who doesn't like children much.

Still, they love her. It is Mary Poppins who puts the children to bed and unbuttons their overcoats and bathes them; Mary Poppins who, familiar to the children simply by her scent—toast and Sunlight soap—comes to their bedsides and comforts them with warm milk and quiet words. It is Mary Poppins who earns the deepest love a child has to offer: that which is bound in his trusting dependence on the person who provides his physical care. "Mary Poppins," Michael cries in anguish the first night she has come to care for them. "You'll never leave us, will you?" It's the great question of childhood, the question upon which all the Mary Poppins books turn: is the person on whom a child relies for the foundation of his existence—food and warmth and love at its most elemental—about to disappear?

"I'll stay till the wind changes," she tells him honestly, and at the first book's end she leaves abruptly. Mrs. Banks is furious; the children are heartbroken. "Mary Poppins is the only person I want in the world," Michael shrieks, throwing himself on the floor. His outburst would be doubly wounding to the modern mother: her child would be suffering and she would be reminded of the love she had forfeited to an employee. But Mrs. Banks is untroubled by either fact. Her concerns are for the disruption of her household. She and Mr. Banks have a dinner party to attend, and it's the maid's day off.

The "Mary Poppins" books are transfixing and original, trading sharp drawing-room comedy with fantastical adventures and carefully rendered scenes of servant life. Travers wrote the first volume quickly, patching together the episodes of Mary Poppins and the children with those of Mary's excursions—to her own "Fairyland," on a private jaunt with Bert. It was likely Madge who sent the manuscript to a London publisher, Gerald Howe. He accepted it immediately, and then Travers chose an illustrator, a young woman named Mary Shepard, whose father, Ernest Shepard, had illustrated the "Winnie-the-Pooh" books. It was the beginning of a long, fruitful, and often unhappy relationship. Shepard illustrated all of the "Mary Poppins" books, though often with some bitterness: Travers allowed her almost no license in how she composed images. Travers was intimately involved in all aspects of the physical production of her books, including the color of the dust jackets and the typeface.

Travers sent the book to press with some trepidation, fearing that a children's book might undermine her hard-won literary cachet. She considered releasing the book anonymously, but her publisher wouldn't hear of it. In the end, she need not have worried. The book, which came out in 1934, was not only popular with children but well received by the audience whose opinion she valued most. T. S. Eliot, who was then an editor at Faber and Faber, expressed interest; Ted Hughes later wrote to tell her that Sylvia Plath had loved "Mary Poppins." Princess Margaret and Caroline Kennedy were both admirers. Over the course of the "Mary Poppins" run—the last book was published in 1988—the series was increasingly influenced by Travers's study of spiritualism, myth, and the occult. But domestic scenes were always her strength. A review of the second book in the series, "Mary Poppins Comes Back," which appeared in this magazine in 1935, observed of the main character: "To our taste, she and her little charges are at their best when they are fixed firmly on the ground, snapping tartly at each other in the very human and cluttery nursery of the Banks family."

It was through Diane Disney, Walt's young daughter, that he first became aware of the "Mary Poppins" books, sometime in the early nineteen-forties. He saw their potential. The story was not in the public domain, however, and its prickly author was known to have rebuffed many Hollywood suitors, including Samuel Goldwyn. Disney, who later put his stamp on many of the classic characters from English children's stories—Winnie-the-Pooh, Peter Pan—turned his attention to persuading Travers, who by this time was again living in London and was in and out of a tempestuous relationship with Jessie Orage, the widow of the *New English Weekly's* founder, Alfred Orage. Of Disney's courtship, Travers later recalled, "It was as if he were dangling a watch, hypnotically, before the eyes of a child." Disney's was a fifteen-year campaign of attention, flattery, and transcontinental telegrams and visits. At long last, Travers succumbed to a deal that gave her a hundred thousand dollars, a cut of the gross, and—unheard of at the Disney studios—script approval. She also demanded that the movie not be a cartoon, and Disney acquiesced; a 1941 strike against the studio by his animators had left him eager to explore other ways of making movies.

The story of "Mary Poppins" depended on the premise that it was normal for a middle-class family to employ a staff, including a servant to raise the children. But to a large segment of Disney's intended audience this idea would be bewildering or, at least, cold and unpalatable. To solve this problem, he summoned Richard and Robert Sherman to a meeting in his large, corner office on the Disney lot in Burbank. The Sherman brothers were songwriters in their early thirties who had worked on several Disney movies and television shows and had recently written the Annette Funicello hit "Tall Paul." They had impressed Disney with the way they "thought story" when they wrote songs. He asked the brothers a question that is now a part of the lore that surrounds the making of "Mary Poppins": "Do you boys know what a nanny is?"

"Yeah," Richard joked. "It's a goat."

Disney realized that translating the story for an American audience would require an explanation of the role of a nanny, as well as a plot that would reward Mr. and Mrs. Banks for choosing to bring up their children themselves.

"We had to come up with a need for Mary Poppins to come to the Banks family," Richard Sherman told me recently. "We had to make her a necessary person." Their first thought was to get rid of Mr. Banks. "We were going to set the thing during the Boer War and have his regiment called up," he said. "Then you could have had a real happy ending, when he came home." And then, Sherman said, they had an inspiration: "You could make the father *emotionally* absent."

Mr. Banks's journey would provide the narrative arc of the film. The mother would be a matron who had lost sight of her most important calling: raising her children. She, too, would be transformed into a good mother (of the kind recognizable to an American audience in the early nineteen-sixties) through the offices of Mary Poppins, who would leave, never to return, once her work with the parents had been completed. "We made it a story about a dysfunctional family," Sherman said. "And in comes Mary Poppins—this necessary person—to heal them."

By the beginning of 1961, a plot had been outlined, there were drafts for several of the songs, and a studio artist named Don DaGradi had created hundreds of sketches on dozens of storyboards to convey the look and action of the film. But Travers still needed to give the plans her blessing—a contractual obligation that suddenly seemed more daunting, because as the Disney team was finishing its work Travers's own treatment arrived in the mail. "The more I think about it," Walt Disney wrote her diplomatically, "the more I am inclined to feel that it would be highly advantageous for all concerned if you could come to Los Angeles and spend at least a week with us here in the studio, getting acquainted with the people who will carry the picture through to completion, and giving us the benefit of your reactions to our presentation." He promised her a lovely trip, with opportunities to tour Disneyland in the company of a hostess and attend a private screening of "The Parent Trap." She would, in short, undergo the final phase of hypnosis, swimming in chlorinated water beside movie stars at the hotel pool, visiting Sleeping Beauty's castle, and—almost as an afterthought—approving the Disney script instead of her own.

But after Disney's years of fawning attention, Travers arrived in California expecting to be deferred to completely. Moreover, she was not as awed by Disney's achievements as others were. Young Richard Sherman may have considered Walt Disney "the greatest storyteller—maybe the greatest man of the twentieth century," but Pamela Travers had discussed her poetry with William Butler Yeats and shared a masthead with T. S. Eliot. She thought that "Steamboat Willie" was a fine entertainment for youngsters, but she considered most of the Disney oeuvre manipulative and false. In her mind, he traded in sentimentality and cynicism, two qualities she despised.

Disney's artistic impulses may be open to interpretation, but he was shrewd. "We had no idea she was coming to town," Richard Sherman recalled, chuckling. "Walt told us two days before she came—and then he went to the ranch in Palm Springs. He said he had to read some scripts." DaGradi and the young songwriters were left to deal with her. They could listen to Travers's ideas, and present their own, but they had no power to agree to anything that she wanted.

The story meeting was punishing. It lasted more than a week, and consisted of the Sherman brothers trying to sell the Disney version, while Travers, whose youthful self-confidence had gathered over the years into an oppressive self-righteousness, interrupted, corrected, bullied, and shamed them. Like countless novelists in Hollywood, Travers sought to salvage every last detail from her original. The sessions were tape-recorded, and on the tapes

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you can hear Travers's booming, imperious voice in terrifying counterpoint to the Sherman brothers' chipper young voices. "But how is that arranged?" she asks of a sequence in which the principal characters jump into the world of a sidewalk chalk drawing. "Walt Disney magic!" one of the young men replies with touching excitement.

At last the meeting ended, and Travers headed back to London, but not before rolling nine sheets of pink stationery from the Beverly Hills Hotel into her typewriter and recounting a slew of anachronisms and unconscionable deviations from the text not sufficiently covered in the story conferences. Back home, she bombarded Disney with a second long assessment of what he was doing wrong. In the end, Travers reluctantly approved a version of the script, and production began. She continued to lodge objections, however, and, two years after signing off on the project, sent Disney another long set of notes, her intention seemingly to belittle the effort and to distance herself from it—an insurance policy against going down with the ship if the picture was a stinker. In the nineteen-eighties, she laid out her objections most pointedly to her young friend and devotee Brian Sibley. "What wand was waved to turn Mr. Banks from a bank clerk into a minor president, from an anxious, ever-loving father into a man who could cheerfully tear into pieces a poem that his children had written?" she wrote. "How could dear, demented Mrs. Banks, fussy, feminine and loving, become a suffragette? Why was Mary Poppins, already beloved for what she was—plain, vain and incorruptible—transmogrified into a soubrette?"

The première was the first Travers had seen of the movie—she did not initially receive an invitation, but had embarrassed a Disney executive into extending one—and it was a shock. Afterward, as Richard Sherman recalled, she tracked down Disney at the after-party, which was held in a giant white tent in the parking lot adjoining the Chinese Theatre. "Well," she said loudly. "The first thing that has to go is the animation sequence." Disney looked at her coolly. "Pamela," he replied, "the ship has sailed." And then he strode past her, toward a throng of well-wishers, and left her alone, an aging woman in a satin gown and evening gloves, who had travelled more than five thousand miles to attend a party where she was not wanted.

"Walt Disney's Mary Poppins" won five Academy Awards. After the movie's release, P. L. Travers became a cottage industry, something she loved and chafed against in equal measure. By then, children's literature had become a legitimate academic field in America, particularly popular at women's colleges, and Smith and Radcliffe invited her to be a writer in residence. It was a mixed blessing. She relished university life and the opportunities for pontificating that it provided, but she found that the kind of young women who studied children's books were nothing at all like the girl who had escaped from Australia half a lifetime ago. She took to hosting louche at-homes in her dormitory apartment, sprawling on the couch barefoot, clad in a loosely belted kimono and coming to life only if a male student or professor wandered into the session.

Richard Sherman believes that Travers's opinion of the movie changed depending on her audience. In private letters, including some to journalists, she mercilessly criticized Disney's lack of subtlety and what she called his emasculation of characters, but she habitually attached a nervous caveat that her remarks were not for publication. (Disney, she claimed, had once reprimanded her for being ungrateful.) To this day, her estate watchfully guards this correspondence.

As much as Travers seethed about her experience in Hollywood, she couldn't resist the thought of a return. According to Sibley, she spent her eighties working on a treatment for a movie sequel. In 1989, she decided to sell her meticulously preserved and organized papers, including a file of annotated carbons of letters she had written to Walt Disney. She had hoped to place the archive with a major American collection, where the curious could, at last, learn her genuine response to the film. But the papers didn't find a buyer, and the offering was eventually repackaged as a collection belonging to "the best-known and best-selling Australian author" and sold to the Mitchell Library, part of the State Library of New South Wales, in Sydney. They are stored there in twenty-eight manuscript boxes, not eighty miles from the house where Margaret Goff tried to kill herself.

In 1994, two years before Travers's death, she made a final attempt to control her legacy, selling the theatrical rights to "Mary Poppins" to the producer Cameron Mackintosh. (His "big four" are "Cats," "Les Misérables," "The Phantom of the Opera," and "Miss Saigon.") As Mackintosh said, "She realized I was her best chance." Last December, after Mackintosh and Thomas Schumacher, the president of Disney's theatrical division—his team produced the stage version of "The Lion King"—negotiated a co-producing deal, "Mary Poppins" opened at the Prince Edward Theatre in London's West End. (It will come to Broadway next fall.) The musical, with a book by Julian Fellowes, is a strange and beautiful thing, containing an astonishing variety of moods and distinguished by a faithful rendering of the books' brisk and sophisticated comic sensibility. It ends with a crowd-pleaser: Mary Poppins departs the Banks family by soaring up and into the rafters, borne aloft by her umbrella and by the forgiving enthusiasm of the audience, which often includes ample representation from the under-ten set. She has been more punitive and frightening than Julie Andrews ever was, but she has nonetheless managed to evoke the powerful emotions—in particular, children's deep fear of abandonment—that have always been at the story's core. On one occasion, when the beloved nanny was making her getaway, a middle-aged man was heard to cry out in anguish, "Mary Poppins, don't leave!" ♦

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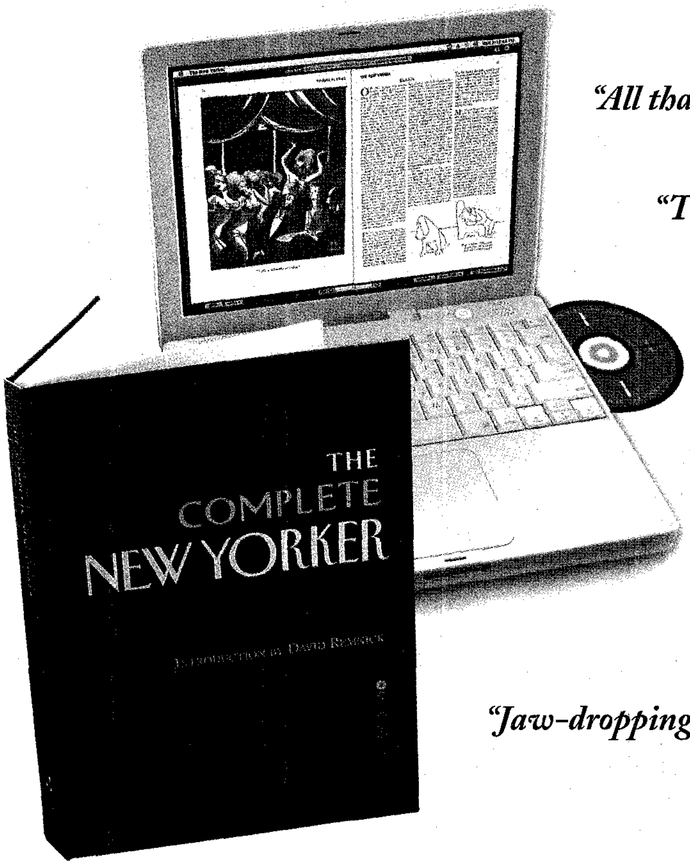

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CHAPTERS 38:1–42:17

BY IAN FRAZIER

Jobless sits, wretched, upon a curbstone. Everything he possessed has been taken from him. His accounts have been closed, house sold for taxes, warranties voided, policies cancelled, back wages garnisheed. His wife has left him for a vintner. His children have run away. He has become afflicted with piles, boils, and scours. Creditors give him no peace.

Three of his friends, pitying his sufferings, visit Jobless and try to raise his self-esteem. Their exhortations only cast him farther down. They depart and he is alone. A righteous man, Jobless nevertheless begins to grumble, questioning the purposes of God. From nowhere, with a great manifestation, God appears.

Then the Lord answered Jobless out of the whirlwind of hot-dog wrappers and plastic drink tops with straws still stuck through them, saying, "Who is this that darkens counsel with poorly researched statements? Suck up your insides into yourself like a man, and hear me, and answer what I will ask.

"Where were you when I laid the cornerstones of the Nation? When I made the fields smooth but at a very slight angle, so the rains would run off, and set the boundary markers, and fixed the posts deep in the earth, so they would not fall down? Speak, if you know.

"When I put the land under my special protection, and all the fifty stars sang for joy, did you apprehend the song, or can you say what it was? And when I gave order to the leagues, each in its proper activity and season, and drew up the divisions, and the arrangement of calendars, the days and nights thereof, were you there also?

"Those who love me and praise my works enjoyed mighty victories in my name. The Dallas eleven held hands in a circle and bowed their heads and prayed with one voice to me, and I went before them on the field, and those opposing them fell, and Dallas overcame, and won it all not only once but five times. Tell me how I accomplished that, if you know.

"Have you seen the fastnesses where Overtime and Sudden Death abide? Can you explain, near the end of the year, who exactly is eliminated, and why, or can you say who will be chosen for the bowls? The runner who solicits my blessing leaps beyond his enemies; I cause their feet to stumble as if entangled in a snare, and they are laid low. Victorious, he kneels by the cushioned pole, removes his helmet, and prays earnest thanksgivings to me with a great host looking on. What is your complaining, compared to this?

"Yes, and consider even this example: When my servant David Ortiz, last year or the year before, in an important situation, entreated me in his heart for a hanging curveball, and I heard him, and ordained a hanging curveball to be thrown, and he smote it hip and thigh, and ended up at second, and stood there in the lights pointing straight up to the firmament where I in fact was, David Ortiz praising me before all the assembly and those at home, did you then understand the vastness of my power, or can you unfold for me the art of causing hanging curveballs in important situations which I employed there?

"Can you make a thirty-cubit putt drop at your command? The faithful petitioner squats upon his haunches, he weighs and judges the path, he closes his eyes and silently raises a solemn prayer to me. Are you conversant with the ways of the Bermuda grasses, and do you comprehend how the inclination of their blades to one direction or another affects what rolls upon them? Know you how the little pieces of plant food, invisible in the grasses' lower depths, have a significant influence for success or ruin? Surely this knowledge, which is mine abundantly from the beginning of the world, is yours as well.

"Does your mind contain the winning numbers for tomorrow's Pick-Six lottery? Correctly, in sequence as they will be drawn? Indeed, mine does—and not only for tomorrow's, because I have ordained all numbers for every drawing for endless ages to come. Those who so beseech me, and keep my covenants, and do no very unclean thing, and buy chances faithfully, but also are above eighteen, I will reward an hundredfold with awareness of the numbers given to them in dreams. Can you do likewise? Speak, you, and answer me."

Then Jobless, eyes averted, thus addressed the Lord: "I am dumbstruck at your power. How you do it, I in my weakness am unable to understand. You are the Man, the Almighty One. What additional can I say?"

And again the Lord spoke, thundering: "Nor have I revealed to you here even a tenth of a tenth of a thousandth part of my dominion. When the rulers, and the captains of great armies, stand before the people, do they not unfailingly invoke my name? And when they ask me to bless the Nation do I not bless it, above and beyond, so that the richest oil anoints it, running down the head even into the beard, in such abundance as to comprise a quarter part of all the oil there is in the world? Does beneficence of this size lie also within your abilities?

"And though you complain against your rulers, and call them hypocrites, vipers, and fools, yet I tell you that they often speak to me in private, and I listen to their requests, and give them counsel, not in so many words, but as it were intangibly. For, if they are fools, why then are they the ones in authority, and not you? Have you ever been to a leadership prayer breakfast on the highest floors, nearer to the heavens and to me? No, truly, this you have never done, not even a single time, and yet you cry to me for aid. Neither do you listen to or watch my messengers, or send them the contributions that they ask for. Are you one of the mighty host whom they can summon even at the last minute to do as I have instructed? Behold, you do not even know what I am talking about, thanks to the virtual blackout these kinds of tidings generally receive."

The Lord continuing in this vein for a while, Jobless waited patiently upon his curbstone, scratching his boils with a tail-light shard and paying heed. And when finally night had become day and the Lord had finished speaking, Jobless confessed his humility and joblessness and manifold failings before the Lord, and prostrated himself, and blessed the Lord. And the Lord lifted Jobless up, and restored to him all that he had had before: children, and ex-wives, and house, and breezeway, and yard, and means of transport, and domestic animals, and temporary occupation without benefits restored He.

And one night Jobless dreamed of six fat cattle with numerals on their sides, and when he awoke he paid the amount required and entered these numerals in the lottery, and lo! the very same were drawn, and Jobless grew wealthy and well favored until his money was no more.

And it came to pass that Jobless, from not seeing a physician as regularly as recommended, died and went to join his ancestors. And the years of Jobless's life at that time were sixty-three.

In 1999, an archeological study led by scientists from Northern Illinois University examined several sites traditionally associated with the Jobless story, and could find no evidence that it had ever occurred. The only artifact offered as proof, a leather lottery ticket, was later identified as dating from a different time. Current scholarship regards the tale of Jobless in terms less of history than of myth. Indeed, its exaggeration is part of its appeal; no actual person, then or now, probably has luck that bad. One would be wrong to dismiss the story out of hand, however. After Jobless, never again would the Divinity address mankind so clearly or at such length. Never again, that is, unless you count a snack-cart man I talked to last week in a lobby in midtown. He said to take the Giants and the under, and I did, and made eighty-seven dollars. ♦

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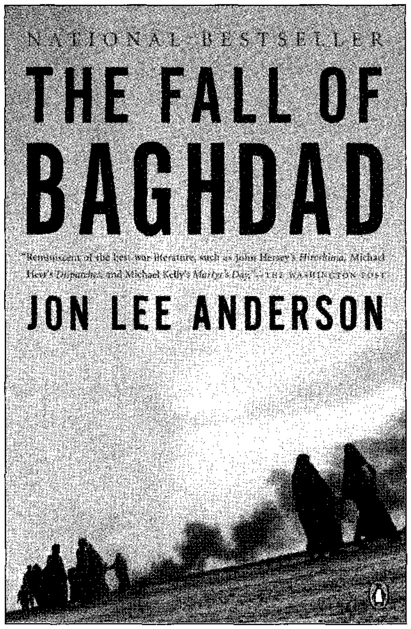

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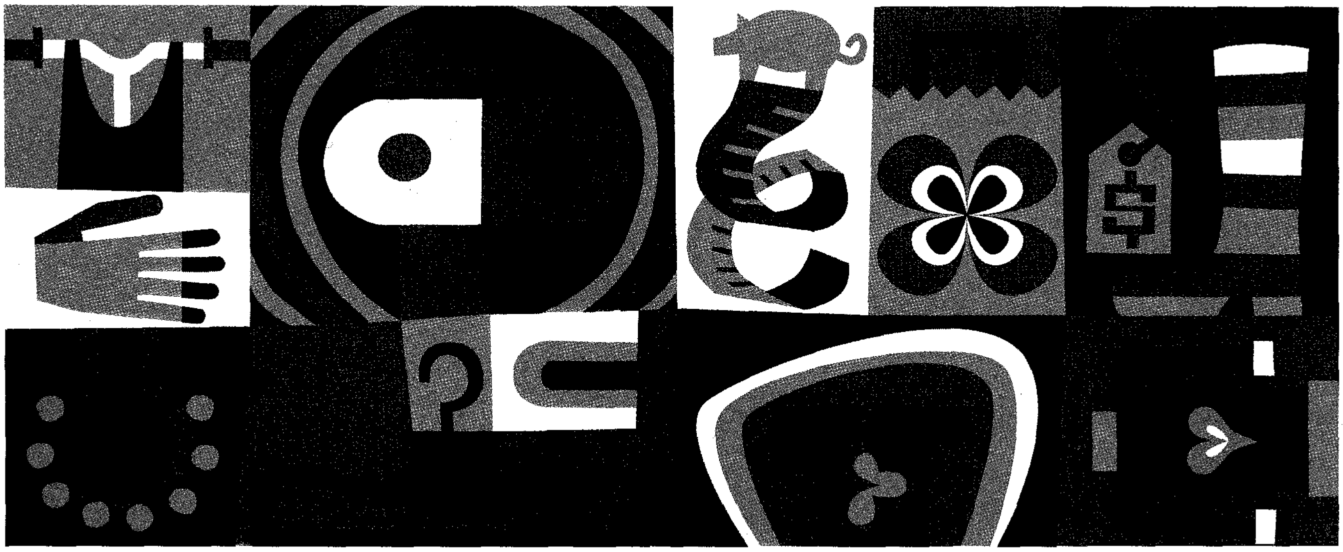
BY PATRICIA MARX

It's time to buy! The shopwindows around town are all a-sheen, and the shelves are stocked. Sales associates are primed to tip us off that the ripped-on-purpose bolero we are trying on—the last of its kind—will almost certainly be snapped up by whoever walks in next. Besides, the salespeople insist, it's just the thing to wear for holiday parties. And aren't we flattered that they assume we've been invited to some?



The look on the racks this year is a collage of lace, velvet, fringe, braiding, beading, ribbons, rickrack, ruche, and pom-poms.

LASSE SKARBÖVIK

So let's get going. We'll walk haphazardly through the streets of Manhattan, stopping at whatever catches our eye. And don't tell me you don't need anything. Do I need the $1,250 red herringbone Copenhagen-designed coat that fastens asymmetrically with jumbo nautical latches, which I ogled yesterday at Really Great Things on the Upper West Side (300 Columbus Avenue, at 74th Street)? Is it vital to my existence that I possess the Sigerson Morrison green rubber rain boots with embossed faux wing tips ($149) from Kirna Zabête (96 Greene Street), when my sturdy old yellow things from the Gap could do the job just as well? How about the hot-pink tape measure in the shape of a pig (pull on the coiled tail to extract the tape)? It is only nine dollars, but, considering that I have no reason to know how many inches or centimetres anything is, that little doodad I picked up at Pylones, a French novelty store (69 Spring Street, and 842 Lexington Avenue, at 64th Street), seems superfluous indeed.

Before we set foot inside a single place of business, permit me to tell you that I am already sick of cowboy boots. Uptown, downtown, there's no escaping them. Everyone, no matter how old or young or un-cowgirl-like, is wearing them. But who am I to talk? I pine for a coat that a sea captain might wear.

The Upper East Side, my domain for many years, has long excelled in fancy wares for little boys and girls. There was, in fact, a time when I used to brag that my neighborhood was the wickerware-for-children capital of the world. But one by one those shops are closing or moving, and in their place we now have, for instance, the recently opened Buzz Brazil Parada Obrigatoria (946 Lexington Avenue, at 69th Street). "Everything's from Brazil except me—I'm from Monaco," says Stephanie Monserrat Laurent, the owner of this tiny space decorated with vines, cheetah fabric, and Op-art tiles. Clothes are displayed on bicycle handlebars. "These are a masterpiece!" Monserrat Laurent says, showing off a pair of four-inch-high-heeled sandals garnished with fat bumblebees made of gold and Swarovski stones ($470). These shoes and many others are made by Francesca Giobbi, who is reputed to be the Manolo Blahnik of Brazil. The look at Buzz Brazil, I see—and all around town, for that matter—is collagey. On every fabric or knit, there are overlays of lace and trim and braiding and ruche and pom-poms and mesh and velvet and beading and fringe and rick-rack and ribbons. This is not the year for the plain, draped togas associated with the I-give-up Eileen Fisher look. This is the year for intricate, don't-try-this-in-home-ec-class clothes.

My favorite Brazil designer as of this minute is Isabela Capeto, who sews nearly everything by hand, embellishing each piece with embroidery, plissé, and, of course, ribbon. "She's important," says Monserrat Laurent in a way that makes me believe her. Which do you think I can't live without more, a short-sleeved white mesh shirt with European crochet insets ($505) or a paper-thin blue striped cashmere cardigan cropped very high ($400)? Or should I just grab an adorable stuffed-animal key chain ($45), perfect for tucking into a stocking, and call it a day? By the way, the cowboy boots here are adorned with pink ribbon, white pony hair, and purple crocodile, and are stamped with colorful designs, for $602 a pair (was $603 just too much?).

We shall not linger over the tiny French frocks at Bonpoint (*bohn-pwanh*), at 1269 Madison Avenue (91st) and 811 Madison Avenue (68th), because the saleswoman chastised me for not reconcealing the price tag ($1,200) that was tucked inside a pink rabbit coat which, in a child's size 4, is too large to fit a rabbit but not by much. (*Pwanh* taken, Mademoiselle.) You should visit some other time, though, if your daughter needs an exquisite pale-blue dress made of layers of tulle and silk ($449) or if a baby boy you know is in want of a handsome green Fair Isle sweater ($150), or if you just get a kick out of being abused by the French (priceless).

Forgive me, but men's apparel will not be a part of this survey, for no matter how many buttons are added or subtracted from a blazer and no matter what sort of experimentation is done with a pant pleat it all looks the same to me. And so we shall march right past Seigo (1248 Madison Avenue, at 89th Street), though I do admire the Andreas Gursky-like panorama of stripes and paisley and polka dots and checks, and I certainly wonder how a purveyor of nothing but neckties and a few scarves manages to stay afloat. Could there be someone in the back room moving Italian dress shirts on the sly?

The two narrow stories that make up Blue Tree, which recently opened at 1283 Madison Avenue (91st), are crammed with toys (for example, the Abraham Lincoln doll that recites excerpts from his speeches, $40, and it comes in Nelson Mandela, too), six-dollar handcrafted chocolate bars (who'd have them any other way?), jewelry (including antique Wedgwood cameo brooches and cufflinks, starting at $100), pocketbooks (no two découpage wooden boxes alike; $100-$500), clothes for women (did you know that John Malkovich has a line of T-shirts? $65 each), clothes for men (hooded cashmere sweaters; $995), and clothes for children (it is, after all, the Upper East Side). Upstairs, a grownup preppie, who has put aside a distressed felt trenchcoat ($1,025) and a long navy shawl that closes with a giant safety pin ($320), and who is trying on embroidered cowboy boots ($450), tells me that Blue Tree "brings downtown to uptown." Uptown people, I have observed, like to look like downtown people, but I kind of doubt that the feeling is mutual.

Cantaloup (1036 Lexington Avenue, at 74th Street, and 1359 Second Avenue, at 71st Street) is a genial spot that caters to modish girls in their twenties (which I am not, but can I speak for you?). "I am always impressed with brown," I overhear the bouncy young saleswoman Elyssa say to a bouncy young shopper as I enter. I couldn't agree more about this color, which, along with green and purple, seems to be giving black a run for its money this season. Before I go, Elyssa offers a tutorial on the many varieties of jeans on the shelves, including the popular Bramm ($198), which comes with a stamped image of the hamsa hand inside near the crotch. "The symbol wards off evil or something, like the Kabbalah," Elyssa says. "People are going for that whole concept, and they fit great."

Over at 208 East 73rd Street is Ina, the chichi resale shop where a friend paid four hundred dollars for a pair of thigh-high Gucci boots that originally cost twelve hundred. I, however, am saving the vintage business for my vintage years, at which time I plan to cash in my collection of sequinned shrugs, embroidered ponchos, gold Lurex miniskirts, torn Pink Floyd T-shirts, and the tape measure shaped like a pig.

You can tell what part of town you're in by the toe of the shoe. We are in midtown now, and things are pointy. On the Upper East Side I noticed a preponderance of the square (does it go without saying?). Later, when we head downtown—and I hope this doesn't ruin the story for you—the round toe will prevail.

Midtown is about department stores, and I'm all for them. I love the up-to-sixty-five-per-cent-off sales that make it possible to save a lot of money merely by spending a lot more; the lounges, a.k.a. rest rooms, that are so plush—a hand basin in each stall at Henri Bendel's—I might just move in; the salespeople who are so soft-sell they are nowhere to be seen; the vast makeup selection (you will know when my ship has come in, because I will have purchased the entire cosmetics floor of Bergdorf Goodman); and the lenient return policy. (Camisole eaten by the paper shredder a year after pur-

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Warm Things

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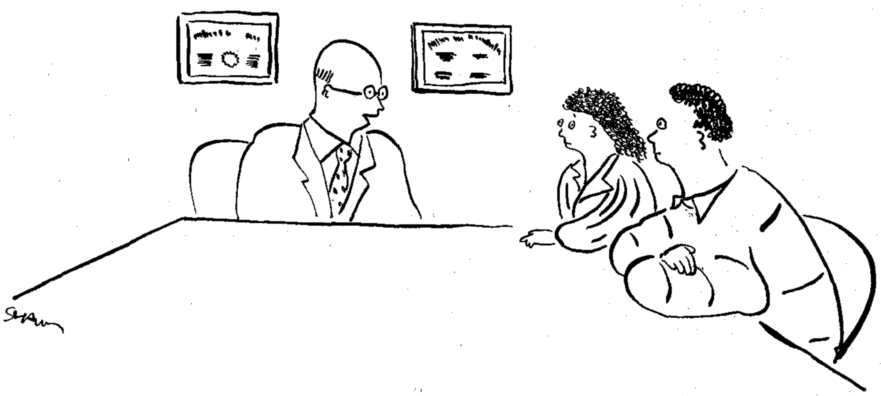


"So you're having trouble conceiving. Have you tried sex?"

• •

chase? They'll take it back with a smile.)

The last time I was in Takashimaya, the New York branch of the oldest department-store chain in Japan, I bought a very nice kimono-inspired cotton bathrobe but parted with it in an act of generosity that I sort of regret. Whether Takashimaya still carries the robe, I do not know, because on my way to sleepwear I am brought to a halt on the ground level by flowers so fresh they look fake. Had I been in the market for a gift to bring to a holiday dinner party, I'd have selected a few green roses ($7 a stem) or ranunculus ($8 a stem), both of which could be mistaken for the vegetables left untouched on a child's plate. Oh, and maybe I'd have had them throw in a few of those lotus pods ($10 a stem), the ones that look like showerheads. Directly behind the flower section is the Now Shop. What kind of human being could resist the quirky lavender-and-brown scarf in a pattern of concentric circles, a hundred-per-cent wool but at a cashmere—or at least alpaca—price ($95)?

On second thought, maybe the scarf is a steal. Here's the paradox: in New York, and probably elsewhere, too, everything costs so much these days that everything starts to seem cheap. Speaking as a pretend economist, I must explain that this is because the rate of real inflation cannot keep up with the rate of inflation in one's head. And so when a person hears of a brownstone going for twelve million, even a person who happens to gulp at the monthly mortgage on her puny one-bedroom, she finds herself thinking, What a bargain! Maybe I should buy that.

My brilliant economic theory, however, is called into question on the third floor of Bergdorf's, where I am taken a little aback. There, I am partial to a sleeveless off-the-shoulder dress in soft leather (more brown than burgundy) alternating with waves of soft suède (more burgundy than brown). The item, as indicated by the label, was made by Akris "exclusively for Bergdorf Goodman"—but it can be exclusively anyone's for $4,670. Other price tags that cause trembling: A simple silk shirt with micro-thin pleating on the cuffs and down the front, also by Akris; $990. A Loulou de la Falaise navy tweed jacket with a navy lace overlay and silver frog closures; $2,510. A smoky-brown cashmere Cesare Fabbri belted cardigan trimmed in braid; $1,090. And, underneath, a Fabbri turtleneck shell with gold trim; $570. But wait. Would not a single piece of haute couture set you back tens of thousands of dollars? So yes, those lovely items on the third floor are not unreasonable after all.

Jewelry isn't normally my thing—earrings, I feel, can make me look like an anchorwoman—but on my way to the door at Bergdorf's I am drawn to a necklace of Chinese porcelain beads by Simon Alcantara ($2,000) and a bangle cuff of sterling-silver webbing by Joan Hornig ($390). I watch Joan Hornig herself, who is wearing cowboy boots with chunky heels and pointy upturned toes, demonstrate for a woman who has just bought one of her multistrand necklaces of black onyx petals interspersed with semiprecious stones—garnet, carnelian, peridot, and tourmaline ($1,695)—that the piece can be worn in a variety of ways. "You can wear it with the veins of the petals exposed or you can wear it reversed so that the petals are smooth. You could wear it long, double it up, or pair it with another necklace. Or you could . . ." Jewelry is very challenging nowadays. Hornig continues, "But, however you choose to wear it, you must promise me one thing." The customer looks at Hornig expectantly, and so do I. "You must wear it in good health."

Somewhere I must have lost a glove. Thus, I return to Really Great Things, home of the nautically latched red coat that I covet and of so many other things I wouldn't mind calling my own. The glove seems not to be there. I steal a peek at a wrinkled metallic velvet skirt cut from a fabric that, according to a salesman named Dante, "has a memory." As it happens, the skirt ($450) can remember if you scrunch it up, but, unfortunately, not if you had both your gloves on the first time it got a good look at you. I hope for better luck at the sister branch of Really Great Things (284 Columbus Avenue, at 73rd Street). The glove seems not to be there, either, but the bright-eyed blond customer whom I'd seen twenty minutes earlier is still in attendance. "I'm here for the dress that kept me up all night," I'd heard her say as she walked in the door. "Let me show you how to wear it," the saleswoman had said of the simple black silk sheath ($1,850) hanging near the counter. The garment—made by a French company called Politique—is trickier than it appears. It can be ruched this way and that way or that way and this way, becoming an elegant skirt, a quirky jumper, or the perfect cocktail dress, length negotiable.

Nowhere are outfits more like Rubik's Cubes than downtown. At Bio Emerging Designers (29 Prince Street), a burgundy sweater made of bamboo fibre can be worn longish, with a pronounced scoop neck, or it can be turned upside down and voilà—it becomes a cropped pullover with a cowl neck. A boiled-wool top made by Casch (designer of that red coat of mine) has nine buttonholes but only seven buttons, which means, according to a saleswoman, more "buttoning options" ($230). How many ways can you wear the collar? Twelve. This is five more options than you have with the Seven Way Dress ($248), created by Kathy Kemp, at a cute little shop called Anna, in the East Village (150 East 3rd Street), but that item comes with an instructional booklet (really); turning a silk knit into a Grecian wrap is evidently not a feat arrived at naturally. The black skirt with hooks and strings and lace at Marithé + François Girbaud (47 Wooster Street) is so discombobulated that I think it might be an elongated bustier ($725). Tito, the hip young man helping me, explains the finery this way: "A modern medieval thing that's kind of, you know, like the Chiquita banana." It is at Marithé + François Girbaud that I encounter a jacket that lights up in the dark (not the perfect gift for a theatregoer; $1,395); a Victorian-style blazer ($1,005) made of polyester that has been ironed in such a way that it appears to be leather (but why?); and a deconstructed sheepskin coat that is laser-cut and printed ($6,710).

The winner, when it comes to clothes that are impossible to put back on the hanger, is Comme des Garçons (520 West 22nd Street). But how can you expect less of a place that you enter through a burnished silvery tunnel? I pass a row of charming round-toed Mary Janes, including a fetching pair in red patent leather ($405), and walk around an amoeba-shaped counter/clothing display on which I find a...somethingwith a skirt of brown tweed and a Junya Watanabe bodice made from what looks like orange duct tape that has been hurriedly wielded by, say, an eBay seller or a lunatic ($1,365). This marvel of an article will not, as is sometimes said of practical outfits, "take you everywhere," but when you do go where it will take you you will cause a sensation. It has charisma, as does a Junya Watanabe black skirt with toggles and padded polyester panels which bears an ill-boding resemblance to a parachute. I cannot tell you much about the appealing navy velour trousers with trompe-l'oeil details that suggest dungarees, because I was asked by a saleswoman to refrain from taking notes.

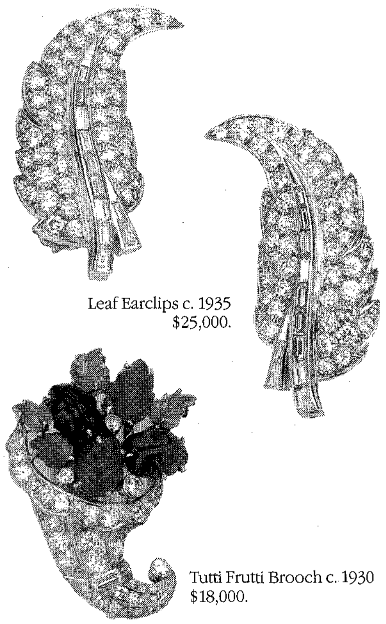
From the outside, the Issey Miyake store in Tribeca (119 Hudson Street) is a landmark cast-iron building, but, inside, the designer's international flagship store makes Comme des Garçons seem like the Little House on the Prairie. A titanium sculpture by Frank Gehry twists through both floors. An uprooted pine tree, part of a temporary exhibit, is suspended by wires in a colossal open steel cube, and the same trick is accomplished nearby with a plantain plant. In light of my recent loss, I consider a pair of black leather gloves covered on the backs with a layer of fake fur, creating a mitten effect ($330). A label warns that, because the item "uses leather of a very natural appearance," the dye may rub off. I drop the glove like a hot potato.

Tired? Let's stop by the eponymous Charles Nolan (30 Gansevoort Street), where a cozy sofa and a flat-screen television that plays a video loop of a wood-burning fireplace make me feel as if I were in someone's apartment, albeit the apartment of a weirdo who has a predilection for displaying women's clothes in his living room. In fact, Nolan says he has modelled the front room here on his current apartment, and the back room on his old apartment, proving, I suppose, that he has come up in the world. Everything I see is stylish and wearable—not that I, who confess to having a closetful of uncomfortable shoes, have anything against unwearability. A short double-breasted indigo jacket with orange pinstripes and an orange lining is pretty terrific ($428), and so are a brown silk turtleneck with a purple stripe ($148) and an iridescent safari jacket in a color that I will describe as deep pavement ($398). And I cannot leave the store without the green woollen fingerless gloves that come with a detachable purple crochet overglove ($40)—left hand only, please.

As I head back home I ponder the meaning of life. Actually, I do nothing of the sort. I ponder instead how much stuff there is to want. A Mara Hoffman white tuxedo shirt ($185) from Dernier Cri (869 Washington Street) that puts all other white tuxedo shirts to shame. Beaded necklaces that start at $30 from the Ukrainian Museum (222 East 6th Street). Anything tweed from La Coppola Storta (246 Mott Street), where there are only newsboy caps for sale, about a gajillion of them ($87 to $600). Any bag from Jamin Puech (247 Elizabeth Street), all of which look as though Kurt Schwitters had constructed them in Arts-and-Crafts class—don't miss the blue-gray brass-plated handbag with two bulges that look like armor for breasts ($785). And, of course, the red coat with the nautical latches, which I think I will ask Really Great Things to put on hold.

And, finally, what to get the friend who has everything?

Closet space. ♦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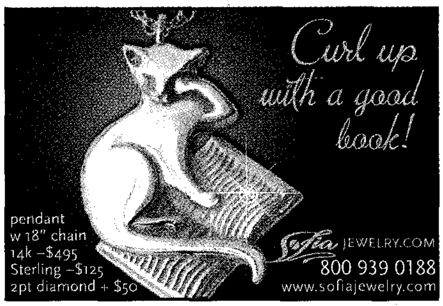
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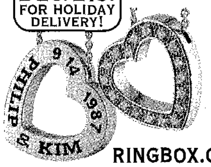
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PROFILES

AMERICAN VICEROY

Zalmay Khalilzad's mission.

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

One afternoon in mid-October, Zalmay Khalilzad, the American Ambassador to Iraq, received a visitor in his office at the United States Embassy in Baghdad. The Embassy, housed in Saddam Hussein's old Republican Palace, is a warren of high-ceilinged rooms, great halls, and stairways, decorated in onyx and marble. The United States has established a paramilitary bureaucracy inside; its scale and its purposeful, no-nonsense atmosphere are reminiscent of the Pentagon. With five thousand employees and contractors, the Embassy is the true locus of power in Iraq. Khalilzad's visitor was Falah al-Naqib, a Sunni Arab who had been Iraq's interior minister in the pro-American government of Iyad Allawi until its defeat, in last January's elections, by a coalition of Shiite religious parties. Naqib had come to Khalilzad, as many Iraqi politicians do, because he had an urgent problem to discuss.

Naqib told Khalilzad that he had a document showing that his successor at the interior ministry, Bayan Jabr, had ordered the arrests of sixteen Sunni men who were later found executed. He said that Jabr had also detained the son of a friend of his, for what he believed were political reasons. For months, there had been reports that newly formed interior-ministry brigades were carrying out death-squad-style operations in and around Baghdad—assassinating insurgent suspects, usually Sunnis. Jabr, a senior official in the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), had recruited a large number of militiamen from the group's military wing, the Badr organization, into the government security forces. Naqib said that he believed the militias were a greater long-term problem than the insurgency, and he wanted Khalilzad to do something about it.

Khalilzad raised his eyebrows with interest, and signalled to an aide, who sat in a corner of the room taking notes. He acknowledged that militias were a problem. "They are the underpinnings of a future civil war, or of warlordism," he told Naqib. He said that he planned to institute a program to get members of the militias off the street and into paying jobs. But his immediate concern was terrorists crossing the Syrian border into Iraq.

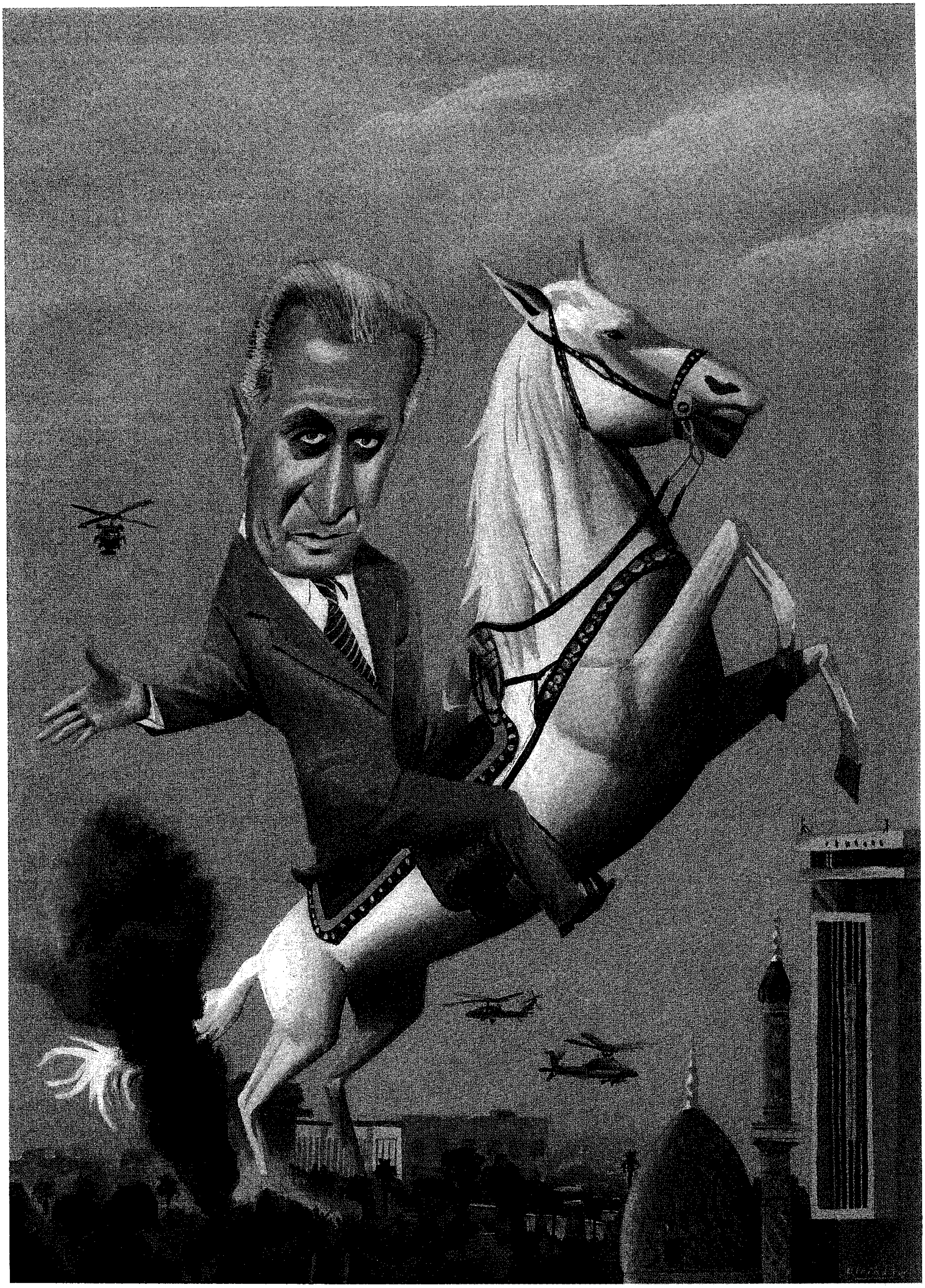
Khalilzad is accredited to the new Iraqi government, but, with the backing of a hundred and sixty thousand U.S. troops, he often seems to be the one holding the government together. His position is more like that of a viceroy or an imperial high commissioner than that of a traditional diplomat. And the conflict he is dealing with is increasingly sectarian. Ever since the U.S. invasion, in March of 2003, the minority Sunni Arabs, who were favored under Saddam Hussein, have felt disenfranchised by the shift in power to the Shiites. The Iraqi insurgency is largely Sunni, as are the foreign jihadi suicide bombers. Their primary victims, along with American soldiers, are Shiites, just as the victims of the Shiite gunmen and American soldiers are mostly Sunnis.

A few weeks after Naqib's visit, I accompanied Khalilzad on a night flight out of Baghdad, headed for a conference in Vienna. On the plane, a military turboprop, an aide produced several paper bags bearing the Subway-sandwich logo; the chain has an outlet inside the Green Zone, the heavily protected area where the Embassy and Iraq's government are situated and where most foreigners in Iraq live. Khalilzad is long-bodied and long-faced. He has hooded brown eyes, a large aquiline nose, and a strong jaw. He dresses sharply, favoring black or charcoal-gray business suits. He is fifty-four and walks with the loose-limbed saunter of a basketball player. As we ate, he told me that the previous night American troops had raided an interior-ministry building and discovered a hundred and seventy-three prisoners being held secretly in a basement cell. (The story appeared the next day on the front pages of newspapers around the world.) Many of the prisoners were malnourished or very sick, and showed signs of torture. Khalilzad said that the soldiers had found instruments of torture, including whips and metal cables, which he'd been shown in his office earlier that afternoon. "It was pretty bad," he said.

Khalilzad has a reputation both as a strategic thinker and as an operator, a man with extraordinary political instincts, and the attention given to the raid on the prison did not seem to be accidental. When he told me about what the soldiers had found, it was clear that he had been prepared for the discovery, and that he had worked out the steps of his response in advance. The story looked like a disaster for the Bush Administration: the war had been justified (at least in retrospect) as a way of bringing democracy to Iraq; now, it seemed, the U.S. was propping up a government that used the same tactics against its opponents as Saddam had. But Khalilzad wasn't unduly concerned; instead, he tried to spin the discovery as a good thing, because it would send a message to the Sunni community that the Americans were intervening on their behalf. It would also let the Shiites in the government know that there were limits to their power, which America was willing to enforce.

In the publicity surrounding the interior ministry's secret prison, Sunni politicians were at the forefront of those denouncing the government. Since the war began, Sunnis generally have been perceived as Baathists, disgruntled tribalists, or Islamist terrorists. (And in fact Naqib, for all his expressions of outrage, has been accused of allowing torture when he was in office.) This was one of the first times that the Sunnis had been able to claim convincingly that they were the victims, and by doing so they had gained

MARK ULRIKSEN



As head of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq, Khalilzad can seem more like an imperial high commissioner than a diplomat.

a new legitimacy. That opportunity had been managed by the American representative in Iraq and an enemy of the Sunni insurgency—Zalmay Khalilzad.

In many ways, Khalilzad seems the ideal envoy for Iraq. He was born in Afghanistan, was educated in Beirut and America, and is a moderate Muslim with long experience in American foreign-policy circles. Since September 11, 2001, he has been at the center of the Administration's war on terror. When the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, Khalilzad was a special assistant to the President on the Middle East and Western Asia, reporting to the then national-security adviser, Condoleezza Rice. He worked closely with the Northern Alliance and other opponents of the Taliban regime. After Kabul fell, he helped to put together the transitional government of Hamid Karzai. In late 2002, with the Iraq war in the planning stages, President Bush named him Ambassador at Large for Free Iraqis.

Khalilzad was a hawk; he was close to neoconservatives like Richard Perle and former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and had argued for regime change in Iraq for more than a decade. He arrived in Baghdad a few days after the first American troops, alongside General Jay Garner, who was sent to supervise the reconstruction of Iraq. But a few weeks later Khalilzad and Garner were suddenly recalled to Washington, apparently at the behest of the Pentagon, and were replaced by Paul Bremer, who became the head of the new Coalition Provisional Authority. Bremer, in almost every major aspect, proved to be ineffectual. His peremptory dissolution of the Iraqi Army, in May of 2003, gave the insurgency vigor and a vastly expanded constituency.

In late 2003, Khalilzad was sent to Afghanistan as the U.S. Ambassador. The political capital he has in the Administration—which is considerable—is due to his successes there. While he was in Kabul, Afghanistan held its first free elections in history, which Karzai won handily. Karzai regarded Khalilzad as his close friend and adviser; he was very unhappy when, last April, President Bush nominated Khalilzad to replace Bremer's successor in Baghdad, John Negroponte. Karzai appealed to President Bush several times to reconsider his decision.

Bush moved Khalilzad anyway. American forces had lost control of security in Iraq. There were more than a hundred car bombings in April alone, and the death toll for American soldiers had passed seventeen hundred. (As of last week, it had risen to over twenty-one hundred.) In October, the Pentagon published its first statistics for Iraq's war dead; it estimated that nearly twenty-six thousand Iraqis had been killed by insurgents between January, 2004, and September, 2005. The figure did not include Iraqis killed by Americans.

When Khalilzad was offered the Ambassador's job, he called Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's national-security adviser, who was Khalilzad's mentor when they were both on the faculty at Columbia, in the early eighties. "I told him he should be in charge of policy and not just the execution of policy," Brzezinski said recently. "He brings a lot more to bear than his predecessors, who knew nothing about Iraq. I wonder how many of our top decision-makers knew, a few years ago, the difference between a Sunni and a Shia. It was a gutsy decision to put himself in the line of fire. He is a broad-minded pragmatist and an insightful strategist. He has a unique advantage in a part of the world in which the United States has become massively engaged and does not have many people at the top equipped to deal with it. The top decision-makers today are ignorant and Manichaean."

Kenneth Adelman, a member of the advisory Defense Policy Board and a prominent advocate for the invasion of Iraq, told me, "I was a little worried when they pulled him out of Afghanistan for Iraq, because he was Afghan, he spoke the language, and he was doing such a good job there—I just couldn't believe they didn't have anyone else who could do Iraq for them." Adelman said that Khalilzad, who is allied with Secretary of State Rice, was "dealing with the most important issue for the Administration. He's at the nexus." He added, "We certainly would've been a lot better off had he been there since the beginning."

Lakhdar Brahimi, a special adviser to Kofi Annan, the U.N. Secretary-General, made a similar point when I spoke to him. "I was dead against the war, but the impression I have is that Khalilzad would have brought some very useful insights and feeling to the situation," he said.

Adel Abdul Mahdi, the Shiite Vice-President of Iraq, told me, "Bremer was an administrator, Negroponte was a diplomat, and Zalmay, well, he's an Oriental."

I asked Mahdi what he meant.

"Remember when the old guys were on top and the young guys were on the bottom?"

"Zalmay presents himself as from the region," he explained. "He behaves in a more friendly way. He understands the culture here and knows he can invite himself to come and see us. He'll drop in and say, 'Can we have a moment together?,' knowing that other people will come by, as is our custom, and that he will be there, and he will discuss things with them, be part of our discussions."

I heard a similar assessment from an Iraqi who is a consultant to a senior politician. "Zal makes it look like his suggestions are in the Iraqi interests. All the major players like him." And, he added, Khalilzad "knows how to play his Muslim card."

A former senior State Department official who worked closely with Khalilzad on Afghanistan said that he was impressed with what he accomplished there, but cautioned that Iraq would be more difficult. "In the last two years, we've gone from being in charge to not wanting to be in charge," he said. "Zal's job is to handle a transition in which the Iraqis are increasingly in charge. Zal is able to operate in this kind of an environment. I am sometimes saddened by the fact that we had him on the ground in 2003 and then he was pulled out, and he's there now at a time which, in automotive terms, I would call top dead center—it's at a tipping point, it could go one way or the other, and I don't think anyone with any sense can say they can call it."

Khalilzad's scaled-down brief is to secure enough stability and political progress in Iraq to allow for an American withdrawal. The question is whether the situation has reached an irretrievable point even for the best of diplomats—whether Khalilzad might be the right man at the wrong time. There is an inescapable irony to Khalilzad's return to Baghdad. Not only is he expected to salvage a situation worsened by political misjudgments made by the same officials who removed him from the scene in 2003 but he is also, in a way that almost no other hawk is, dealing with the consequences of a war he helped start.

"Khalilzad was absolutely part of the neocon cabal that brought the war to Iraq," Peter W. Galbraith, a former U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, who has written extensively on Iraq and the Kurds, said. Still, he added, "I credit him with bringing the first dose of realism I've seen in this Administration since they came to Iraq."

Khalilzad told me that in 2003 he had been able to move around freely on Baghdad's streets and buy ice cream, something that was no longer conceivable. Back then, he was very hopeful for Iraq. Two and a half years later, he had returned to a radically altered landscape, with an insurgency capable of mounting an average of seventy attacks each day. Barely four months into his tenure, there was an intensifying campaign in Congress to withdraw American soldiers from what looked to many like an unwinnable war. Khalilzad said, "Willy-nilly, we've gotten ourselves into a situation where our power and our prestige, our future security, have gotten very linked with this."

Later, he said, "I see myself as a soldier, a kind of diplomatic soldier, reënlisting. When I had to come to Iraq after Afghanistan, it was not an easy decision. I had developed such good relations with a lot of people there; I felt that a lot had been achieved but that Afghanistan still had a long way to go. And then to come here . . ."

In Baghdad, the threat of violence is so omnipresent that it has become mundane. Sometimes it hits with precision, and at other times with the randomness of a tornado. When three suicide car bombers struck the Palestine and Sheraton hotels in October, killing seventeen people, I was staying in a villa a few hundred feet away; the building shook, and many of its windows were shattered. Dozens of pieces of shrapnel landed in the garden, along with the twisted chunk of a car radiator. The next morning, amid the debris, I found two severed human feet lying in the street, a hundred yards apart, like uncollected garbage.

The Green Zone offers some degree of sanctuary from the war. Except for the mortar shells that are lobbed into it, and the bombs that periodically go off around it (and, on a couple of occasions, inside it), Iraq's violence is something of an abstraction to the Americans who live there. But at the barricaded entrances where people and cars are checked, where the Zone ends and Iraq begins, the Iraqi soldiers are often edgy; twice during my stay, they fired bullets over my head when my car pulled in too close to their positions. One day, after meeting with Khalilzad, I was about to walk out of the Green Zone when there was a large explosion several hundred feet away, outside the walls. It was followed by the sound of shooting. A car bomb had destroyed an S.U.V. being driven by contractors for DynCorp International. It killed two of them, both South Africans.

Khalilzad's residence in the Green Zone, a large brick house similar to those in Baghdad's affluent neighborhoods, is down a street lined with high concrete blast walls. Access is controlled by U.S. soldiers and bodyguards, and approaching vehicles must pass over the steel hatches of a tank trap. Whenever Khalilzad leaves the Green Zone, he travels with his own mobile war machine: a convoy of vehicles with an array of armaments, driven by his security men, American employees of Blackwater, a firm based in North Carolina. They are known in Baghdad for ramming cars that don't get out of their way fast enough. Helicopters often provide air support.

For Iraqi officials who work in the Zone but live elsewhere, the risks are multiplied; many have been assassinated on their way to or from their neighborhoods. Those with the means to do so send their families abroad. In November, I sat in on a meeting between Khalilzad and Adnan Pachachi, a patrician Sunni secularist who in the nineteen-sixties served as Iraq's foreign minister and as its U.N. Ambassador. Pachachi lives in Baghdad outside the Green Zone, but his wife and daughter live in London, as do close relatives of Ahmad Chalabi, the former exiled politician; Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the Prime Minister; and Iyad Allawi. (Mahdi's wife and children live in France; his brother was assassinated in Baghdad in October.) At one point, Khalilzad mentioned having gone into the "Red Zone" to visit a cleric. Pachachi looked perplexed, and asked him, "What is that, the Red Zone?" Momentarily embarrassed, Khalilzad explained that he had meant to say "Baghdad."

Another day, Khalilzad met with the Ambassador representing one of America's coalition partners, a country that has a contingent of troops in Iraq. Khalilzad steered the discussion to a reconstruction program that he hoped the country would join. But the foreign Ambassador wanted to talk about a security issue. A senior Iraqi government official had seized the building that the Ambassador's country had acquired inside the Green Zone for its embassy. (The foreign Ambassador asked that the name of his country and of the Iraqi official be withheld from this report, because of safety concerns.) As a result, he and his staff had been forced to live in dangerous conditions outside the Green Zone.

Khalilzad said that housing in the Green Zone was a problem. Jaafari and President Jalal Talabani had recently feuded over a vacant building. "The President almost sent in his peshmerga"—Kurdish militiamen, Khalilzad said, laughing. The foreign Ambassador listened to this anecdote in stony silence. (I learned later that Jaafari's and Talabani's men had been on the verge of a shootout when Khalilzad intervened. Talabani kept the building, a former NATO headquarters.)

Khalilzad tried to change the subject to aid money that the foreign Ambassador's country had pledged. The foreign Ambassador told him, "There's been a slowdown in the investment. There is opposition, you see, because of the housing issue. If the Iraqi government doesn't care enough about a government that puts that much money into its country, then why . . ." His voice trailed off, and he looked at Khalilzad expectantly.

Khalilzad promised to talk with the Iraqi Prime Minister about the house, and for the first time the foreign Ambassador looked pleased. "You would be loved by my guards," he said.

When Khalilzad arrived in Baghdad this summer, his first task was to broker a compromise on a constitution. The deadline was August 15th, and there were deep divisions. Sunnis had, by and large, boycotted last January's election for the assembly responsible for producing the document, and many felt that their interests were being ignored. The deadline was extended for two weeks, at Khalilzad's urging, as he tried to broker a compromise.

Tariq al-Hashemi, the leader of the Sunni-dominated Iraqi Islamic Party, told me that Khalilzad helped to persuade him to endorse the draft. Hashemi said that many Sunnis did not understand or agree with his decision; extremists fired a rocket at his party headquarters in retaliation. When he spoke to Khalilzad, Hashemi said, "I made the point to him that he must insure that Iraq remains whole for the time being. We're on the brink of civil war, and I fear the future is still rather dim."

Hachem al-Hassani, a U.S.-educated Sunni moderate who is the speaker of Iraq's transitional National Assembly, agreed that Khalilzad had helped to bring Sunnis into the political process. "Khalilzad played the role of mediator," he said. "Everyone knows he's quite close to the Bush Administration, so this is quite useful."

The Shiite SCIRI leader, Abdulaziz al-Hakim, was more guarded. In the constitutional negotiations, he said, "the U.S. had big concerns; there were a lot of American interests involved. We can't say that Mr. Zal was neutral in the full meaning of the word, and this had to do with U.S. strategy. President Bush even intervened in the process, by calling me. This is natural."

Peter Galbraith served as an informal adviser to the Kurdish leaders Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani during the negotiations and attended a number of meetings with Khalilzad. He said that Khalilzad, whom he has known for twenty years, proved to be a pragmatist. "This surprised me, frankly, because he is extremely ideological, extremely partisan. But I was impressed with what he did."

Galbraith's satisfaction, however, has much to do with what others see as the constitution's great weakness: that it prepares the way for Iraq to split into Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish statelets. In the end, Galbraith said, the Kurds "got everything they wanted: control of their oil, supremacy of Kurdish law over Iraqi law, and their own army, as well as limitation on the power of the central government." Many of the thorniest issues, however, including the Shiites' demand for an autonomous region of their own, were left unresolved. The draft was approved in a national referendum, despite opposition in Sunni provinces.

Galbraith has been one of the chief spokesmen for the idea that the break-up of Iraq would be for the best. "Iraq as a country will not hold together," he said. "The question is what is a decent interval, and whether there will be two states or three. But sooner or later there will be an independent Kurdistan. And this is something Khalilzad grasps. He did what strategists ought to do, he prioritized." Galbraith pointed out that under Khalilzad the rhetoric about a U.S. commitment to a single, unified nation of Iraq had diminished. "He understood quickly that this constitution was more of a peace treaty than a nation-building exercise, and that what he had to produce was a road map to avoid a future civil war.

"Khalilzad is clearly a policymaker on this," Galbraith said. "There's a common misunderstanding that American Ambassadors go and have tea and carry messages that have been formulated in Washington. But, really, the Ambassador is in charge of policy in that country. You have the expertise, the knowledge, and know the people, and ultimately it's your position that gets carried. You have an advantage over the people in Washington. Khalilzad understood this in Afghanistan and he understands it in Iraq. And he's in the business of shaping his own instructions. So when he's going out and talking with Sunni sheikhs, or delaying the constitution to allow compromises to be made, that's him doing it, not Washington."

As I watched Khalilzad at work, he seemed less a diplomat than a chaos theorist, looking for strands of order in disorder. Khalilzad said, "I tell my friends, 'There is turmoil under the heavens, and there are lots of opportunities now available.' If you've got a difficult situation, and a lot of players, and some of them are less good than others, then turmoil is an opportunity."

Khalilzad is not a particularly gifted public speaker. He has a pleasant manner, but his speeches are full of pauses and catchphrases—usually echoes of things that President Bush and Condoleezza Rice have already said. His true métier is

"In our little socioeconomic group, I've always taken care of the socio and John's done the economic."

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the closed-door meeting. In his office, he rarely sits behind his desk, preferring to pull a chair out and join his interlocutors. When he is with Iraqis, he often fingers a set of green stone prayer beads, though in a more absent-minded way than religious Muslims, who use each bead as a mental prayer-stop; for Khalilzad, the beads serve as a sort of prop, a convenient visual reminder of his Muslim identity. He is highly attuned to social niceties; when he met with Ayatollah Hussein al-Sadr, a leading cleric, he sat much more straight-backed than he usually does, with his knees held closely together. His prayer beads were prominently employed.

When he met with Falah al-Naqib, however, Khalilzad sat in a chair in front of his desk, while Naqib perched on the visitors' couch. This had the effect of making Naqib look slightly up at Khalilzad as they spoke. On this occasion, Khalilzad played with his beads in the way that a business executive might play with a pen. He rarely betrayed his opinion; rather than agree with Naqib's more provocative statements, he'd say, "You think so?"

At one point, Naqib leaned forward and asked nervously, "Can you tell me whether the rumor we are hearing is true—that the Pentagon is supporting Ahmad Chalabi for the election?" Looking amused, Khalilzad said, "I can assure you that is not the case." He added that it was U.S. policy not to favor any candidate. Naqib listened to Khalilzad attentively and said, "O.K., then." He looked relieved.

The parliamentary elections, scheduled for December 15th, were a central theme in most of Khalilzad's meetings. Khalilzad relayed messages about America's interests, cloaked in diplomatic obliqueness but decipherable to his interlocutors. I had found it to be an article of faith among many Iraqis that Allawi, the former interim Prime Minister, remained the preferred candidate of the U.S. and British governments. Naqib and Pachachi have joined his coalition. Khalilzad, in his meetings with them, raised the issue of corruption every time Allawi's name was mentioned. The Jaafari government had issued arrest warrants against some two dozen former officials of Allawi's government, in a case involving a billion dollars in missing government funds. When Khalilzad asked Pachachi about the charges, Pachachi replied sanguinely that he thought they were politically motivated. When Khalilzad asked Naqib about corruption, he said, "This is inevitable, because of the insecurity in the country."

"So everyone is just raking it in, as insurance?" Khalilzad was smiling.

"Exactly," Naqib said. "I'll bet this government, after it ends, will be discovered to have been ten times more corrupt than our government."

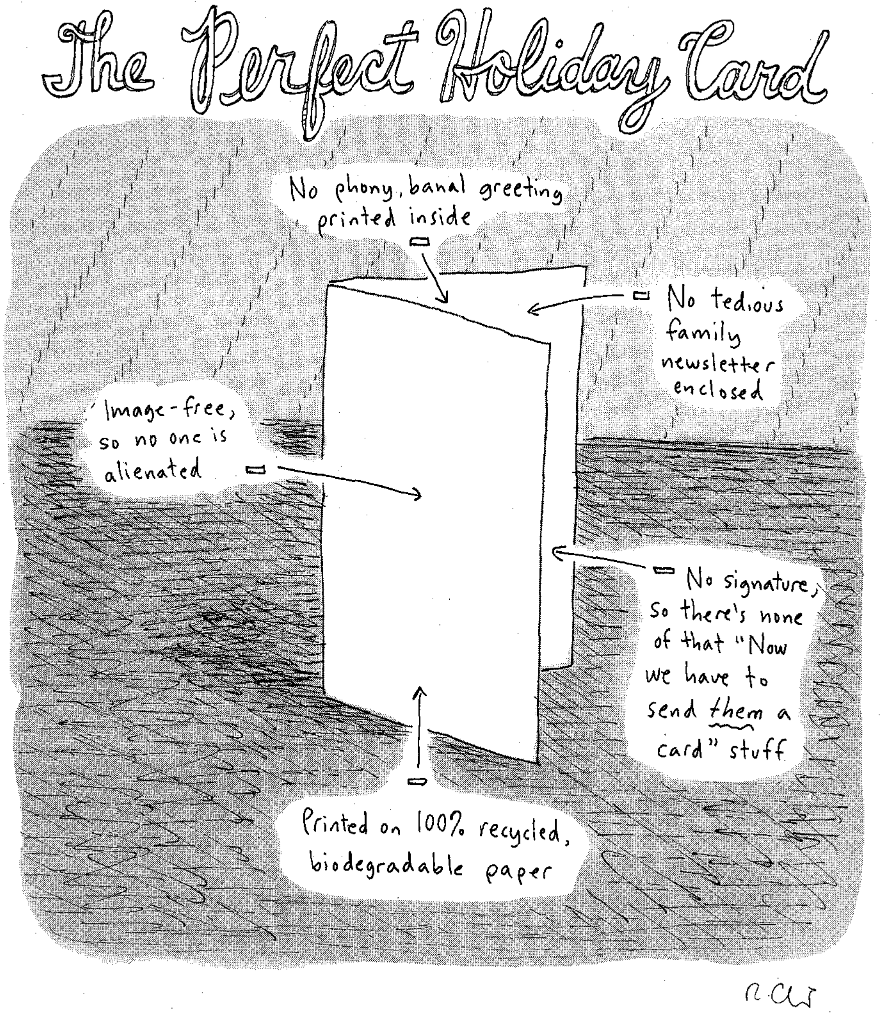
I asked Khalilzad whether the corruption charges might ensnare Allawi. He said that although he had some concerns, he had seen no evidence implicating Allawi personally, and that he had talked to him about the matter, stressing that he must clear his name. Khalilzad's emphasis on the issue when talking to Allawi's allies seemed to have multiple purposes: to make them aware of the need to deal with the charges, to foster the impression that the U.S. was neutral, and, possibly, to distance the U.S. if more evidence against Allawi emerged.

Khalilzad said that he regarded Allawi, Jaafari, and Mahdi, the Shiite Vice-President, as the front-runners in the election, with Ahmad Chalabi as a likely compromise candidate. Chalabi was for years a favorite of neoconservatives, but his reputation has suffered because of his promotion of bad intelligence on W.M.D.s, and in May, 2004, he was accused of passing classified information to Iran. But Chalabi has remained politically prominent in Iraq—he is now a deputy Prime Minister—and, when he visited Washington in November, he met with Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Rice.

Barham Salih, a leading Kurdish politician, said, "One thing to know about Zal is that no one can bullshit him." During the constitutional talks, Iraqi politicians were "like a herd of cats, and he was the herder," Salih said. "Zal is definitely a strategist, but he also has an eye for the detail; he doesn't mind spending long hours with small players, if he feels it's important for the ultimate goal. So he's good on tactics, too." Salih added that Khalilzad's ability, as an Afghan immigrant, to reach such heights within the U.S. policy establishment was an enduring source of interest to politicians in Baghdad. "Iraqis are fascinated by this," he said.

Khalilzad was born in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 1951. At the time, his father was a civil servant in the government of King Zahir Shah, working in the local office of the ministry of finance. His mother, he said, "did not have a formal education, yet she was very modern, always very informed. She could not read or write herself, but she would have the kids read the newspapers to her. I think if she had been born at a different time she would have been quite an established political figure."

Cheryl Benard, Khalilzad's wife, an Austrian-American who is a senior political analyst at RAND, the research group, where she and her husband have worked off and on for years, told me, "Zal's mother was married to his father at the age of twelve. His father was a mid-upper-level bureaucrat—and an autocrat. Zal calls his mother a tough cookie. He believes that if you don't have social advancement of women in society you don't have social advancement period. One of the things about the United States that appealed to Zal was the way women were treated."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When Khalilzad finished the eighth grade, the family moved to Kabul; by the tenth grade, he had become the top student in his class, and was given a chance to be an exchange student in the United States. He spent his year with a family in Ceres, a town near Modesto, California—the father was an engineer at the Gallo winery and the mother was a schoolteacher. When he returned to Afghanistan, Khalilzad said, he had changed. "I had different values, greater interest in sports, a more pragmatic way of looking at things, and a broader horizon. I had a sense of how backward Afghanistan was. And I became more interested in how Afghanistan needed to change."

After high school, Khalilzad enrolled at Kabul University. "One day, I was walking around with my friends, and there was an announcement for tests for scholarships to the American University of Beirut," he recalled. They decided to take the tests just to prove they could pass, "like a prank." Soon after, Khalilzad learned that he had won a scholarship, and had four weeks to leave for Beirut. "I remember telling them I didn't plan to go. They were shocked." But the American Ambassador, Robert G. Neumann, whom Khalilzad met at a Fourth of July party, convinced him to take it. (This summer, Neumann's son, Ronald, assumed his father's old post, after Khalilzad vacated it.)

Khalilzad arrived in Beirut in 1970 and stayed until 1974, the year before the civil war broke out in Lebanon. He studied political science and the history of the

Middle East. At the time, Beirut was a sophisticated and cosmopolitan place, and the American University was one of the intellectual and cultural fulcrums of the Middle East, where young Arabs, Europeans, and Americans met and studied and debated issues openly. "It was a great place to be a young person," Khalilzad recalled. "There were kids from all over the world. And I was taught a lot about Afghanistan and the Middle East."

Khalilzad also met Cheryl Benard, who was researching a dissertation on Arab nationalism. "I'm a military brat," Benard said. "My father was with the American occupation forces in Vienna. My mother was Austrian. I grew up on military bases in the U.S. and Europe." Benard is a slim, youthful-looking woman with fair skin and curly hair. She and Khalilzad have two sons: the older is twenty-two, and the younger is fourteen.

In 1975, Khalilzad went to the University of Chicago to pursue a doctorate in political science. "Zal was very much a child of the seventies, in jeans, a dishevelled haircut," Augustus Richard Norton, one of his fellow-students and now a professor of international relations at Boston University, recalled. "He looked very much the part of a West Beirut radical in those days."

At Chicago, Khalilzad became a student of Albert Wohlstetter, an expert in military strategy. Wohlstetter's argument that the U.S. should achieve global supremacy through strategic nuclear weaponry had a powerful effect on the thinking of the nascent movement of American neoconservatives. Khalilzad recalled that he had sat in on a lecture in which Wohlstetter spoke about the "inevitability of war." Khalilzad raised his hand and asked about "the inevitability of permanent peace." This got Wohlstetter's attention. He asked to see Khalilzad after class, and invited him to join a seminar he taught.

Wohlstetter held his seminars at his Chicago apartment, to which he invited people like Wolfowitz, who had been his student, to speak to the group. "Zal thrived in this environment," Norton said. Wohlstetter had cultivated a network of like-minded thinkers, both at Chicago and at RAND, where he worked for many years, and several had gone on to jobs in government. (Wohlstetter introduced Perle to Chalabi.) According to Norton, Wohlstetter helped Khalilzad to make contacts in Washington early in his career. "Without the connections, Zal might have ended up as an obscure academic," Norton said. "What Albert was able to do was to give him fast-track access to fairly Olympian heights of power, and that's quite an advantage."

Khalilzad told me that he found Wohlstetter a fascinating figure, "a name-dropper of people like J.F.K. and Kissinger." He began working for a think tank that Wohlstetter had formed, Pan Heuristics, which had contracts with the U.S. government. Khalilzad wrote papers for Pan Heuristics on nuclear proliferation, and a Ph.D. thesis on Iran's nuclear program. "Wohlstetter became a huge influence in his life; it was what turned him toward strategy," Cheryl Benard said.

In 1979, Khalilzad accepted an offer to teach in the political-science department at Columbia. In December of that year, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Khalilzad wrote several articles on the fight against the Soviets, using a pseudonym to protect members of his family who were still there. "I wrote that the Soviets had made a huge mistake in invading Afghanistan, that they could be defeated," Khalilzad said. This went against the conventional wisdom that the Soviets would overwhelm the Afghans. "The articles got a great amount of attention in the government circles."

Khalilzad became an American citizen in 1984, and soon afterward won a fellowship from the Council on Foreign Relations, intended to give academics practical experience. "I was going to do it on nuclear war at the Defense Department. But George Shultz, Secretary of State at the time, had heard this, and said, 'No, no, no, forget about nuclear stuff, we need him on two wars we have, the Iran-Iraq War and the Afghan war.' "

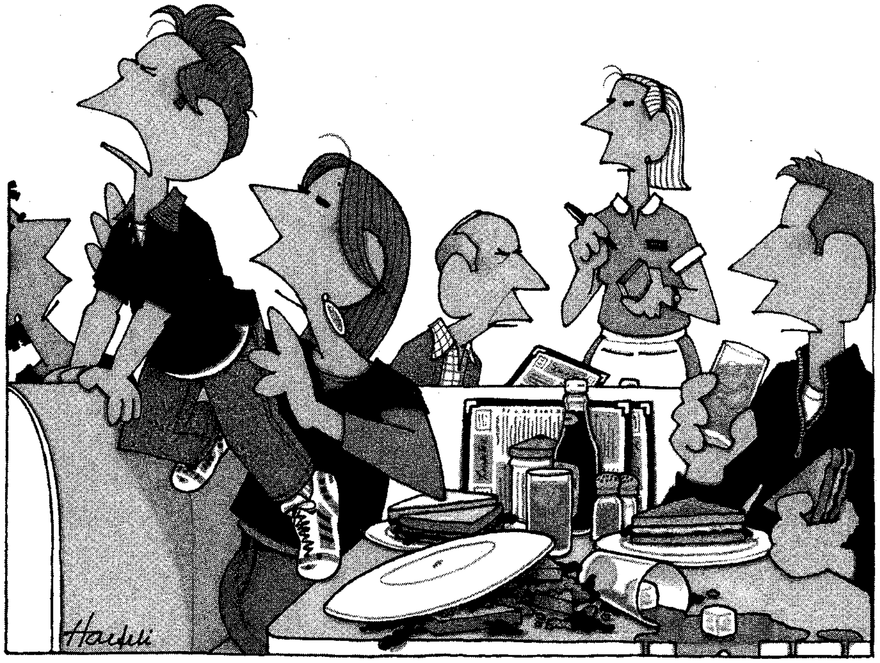
Cheryl Benard said, "He loved teaching, but, like any political scientist, you'd like your advice to be listened to." She added, "He'd come home and describe a day that would have made me want to shoot myself. But his eyes were glowing."

The U.S. had been channelling aid to the mujahideen through the C.I.A. and the Pakistani intelligence service. Around the time Khalilzad arrived, in 1985, President Reagan signed a secret directive authorizing an increase in aid to the Afghans, but the Administration was divided over whether that should include sophisticated heat-seeking antiaircraft Stinger missiles. Khalilzad argued strongly that it should. After months of debate, the mujahideen got the Stingers.

"The Stingers sent a big message," Khalilzad said. "It was an open secret that we were involved, but the intelligence channel gave us deniability. The Stingers removed that. American power and prestige had become engaged, we had crossed a threshold. But, at the same time, there was a lot of soul-searching as to whether or not this was going to make it harder for the Soviets to back down."

The Stingers undermined the Soviets' aerial dominance, and are now regarded as having helped induce the Kremlin leadership to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989. The war had killed more than a million Afghans, maimed tens of thousands, and created five million refugees. After the Soviets left, the U.S. cut back its support for the mujahideen, who, awash with weaponry, were left to fight it out amongst themselves. This led to a devastating civil war, the rise of the Taliban, and, ultimately, to Al Qaeda's use of Afghanistan as its base. Khalilzad, who is proud of his role, has a nuanced and somewhat problematic view of the U.S.'s responsibility for the implosion, one that suggests that the fault lies not with the policy he advocated but with those who questioned it.

"Let me first make a broader point about my beliefs," he told me, in the midst of a discussion about Iraq. "I think it's a terrible mistake to think at the beginning of something that you know the end. It sometimes can have a very distorting effect on what you do, and precludes some options, and limits the realm of possibility. In Afghanistan, for instance, one of the terrible assumptions was that the Soviets were going to win. And so no care was given to whom you were helping, and what might happen after the Soviet withdrawal. Because there wasn't going to be a post-Soviet scenario. Maybe we wouldn't have allowed so many



"Don't look at me. I'm just the gay friend."

Arabs to come in, maybe we wouldn't have subcontracted so many things."

It was the fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan that pushed Khalilzad toward becoming a foreign-policy hawk. In 1988, he wrote a policy paper that called for the U.S. to shift its focus from Iran to Iraq. "It was a simple geopolitical kind of analysis, which said that Iran had weakened dramatically at the last phase of the Iran-Iraq War and that Iraq had emerged as the dominant military power in the Gulf," Khalilzad said. "We needed to consider some tough options: do we help Iran directly or indirectly, do we play a more direct role in containing Iraq ourselves, or do we undermine Iraq, or Saddam, from within? Somebody leaked it to the New York *Times*, and it was reported that the Administration was considering a new policy toward Iraq and Iran."

As a result of the leak, Secretary Shultz convened a meeting. "Shultz asked who had written the memo. People said, 'Zal wrote it.' As Shultz was reading it, his face was getting redder and redder and redder. I said, 'Sir, I'm being paid to offer geopolitical advice.' And right then and there he wrote a big 'NO' on it," Khalilzad said. "But the idea had been disseminated."

Khalilzad left government to go to RAND in 1988. The next year, General Norman Schwarzkopf, the head of the U.S. Army's Central Command, asked him to take part in a study of the threat posed by Saddam. "Within days, RAND got a big contract," Khalilzad said. "I was called by the Secretary of Defense, Cheney at the time, to see if I would come and work for the Defense Department. I got to the job a couple of days after we started the attack."

Khalilzad was unhappy with the conclusion of the war, which drove Saddam from Kuwait but left him in power. "I had thought, frankly, that we should have helped the Iraqis get rid of Saddam," he said. "There was of course a legitimate concern, clearly, that if we went to Baghdad we might get stuck. I remember sending memos to Cheney, saying, 'You can't stop! We have an opportunity to do a bigger thing.'"

After the war, Khalilzad was given the task of assembling an analysis of America's strategic position in the new, post-Cold War world. The result was what he refers to as the "infamous" draft Defense Planning Guidance of 1992. It reflected the contributions of many officials in the Pentagon, including Wolfowitz and Cheney, and it articulated a strategic view that Khalilzad shared. Khalilzad recalled, "The central core of the D.P.G. was that bipolarity had ended, and the U.S. was now the world's single leading power, and that our goal in this new era was to preclude a return to a bipolar system, or a multipolar system." The draft laid out a strategy for maintaining America's global hegemony through the threat of force against emerging regional powers. It, too, was leaked to the press, where it was widely criticized, and as a result the rewritten, final version was less confrontational. But the draft D.P.G. is now seen as defining the hard-line neoconservative doctrine that contemplated, among other things, preëmptive warfare.

Khalilzad resists being labelled a neoconservative. ("To the best of my knowledge, I have not sat together with people and said, 'Aha! Here is a doctrine, and this is what it means,'" he said.) As far as Iraq is concerned, however, he was in the neoconservative camp for years before the war. In 1998, Khalilzad signed an open letter to President Clinton that called for more robust action against Saddam. Other signatories included Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Perle. Khalilzad told me that he had signed on because "when I left the government there was this sense that we had not done the right thing in Iraq. We had unfinished business."

When Khalilzad has appeared in the press over the years, it has often been in connection with behind-the-scenes policymaking, and in certain quarters he is regarded as a Strangelovian figure, a dark eminence of American imperial power. One issue that has provoked controversy is his association with the energy company Unocal, which earned Khalilzad a cameo in Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11." In the mid-nineties, Unocal had tried unsuccessfully to secure a gas-pipeline deal from the Taliban government, which had seized power in Kabul in 1996 after years of civil war. Moore suggested that Republicans had first pandered to the Taliban, at the behest of their cohorts in the oil industry, and then turned against them when they didn't make a deal.

Khalilzad worked as a paid consultant on the pipeline project, and during the negotiations he publicly expressed support for the Taliban. In 1996, in an editorial for the Washington *Post*, Khalilzad wrote, "The Taliban does not practice the anti-U.S. style of fundamentalism practiced by

Iran—it is closer to the Saudi model. The group upholds a mix of traditional Pashtun values and an orthodox interpretation of Islam." He also met with Taliban emissaries on a trip to Houston.

Richard Norton recalled taking part in a seminar with Khalilzad around that time. "One of the questions we debated was whether we could work with the Taliban, and he was optimistic," Norton said. "Zal's been right on a lot of things, but he was certainly wrong on that."

Khalilzad told me, "It's become an urban legend that this whole thing about Afghanistan is about oil. I was asked, not by Unocal but by Cambridge Energy Research Associates, a research company, if I would do a cost-benefit analysis of building pipelines across Afghanistan. And from then it evolved, but I always went through Cambridge. And during that time I also testified a couple of times on Afghanistan to Congress, and I was very critical of the Taliban."

Khalilzad said that what changed his mind about the Taliban was their brutality, not the failed deal. And he was not the only former official involved. Still, in many ways, the pipeline project represented the classic Washington revolving door between the corporate world and the foreign-policy establishment.

"You can look at Zal's political career and find things to criticize," Cheryl Benard said. "Unocal, for instance. Political scientists, especially if they are regional experts, frequently do risk analysis for corporations. Yet, in Zal's case, this gets blown all out of proportion. There are Web sites and news reports that try and see Zal's role with Unocal as an explanation for the U.S. attack on Afghanistan. It's crazy."

After George W. Bush was elected, in 2000, Khalilzad ran the transition team at the Pentagon for Donald Rumsfeld. "Rumsfeld may have considered him too wimpy, because he was always smiling, and just too nice for the tough job," Ken Adelman, of the Defense Policy Board, told me. "That may be why he didn't get the under-secretary-for-policy post, for which he would have been ideal. It went to Doug Feith, instead, which was very unfortunate, as later became quite evident." (Feith played a key role in assembling the intelligence used to build the Administration's case for the war.) Khalilzad went to the National Security Council instead. "He was a staffer, and not a very prominent staffer," Adelman said. "But then 9/11 came along, and people looked around and there he was."

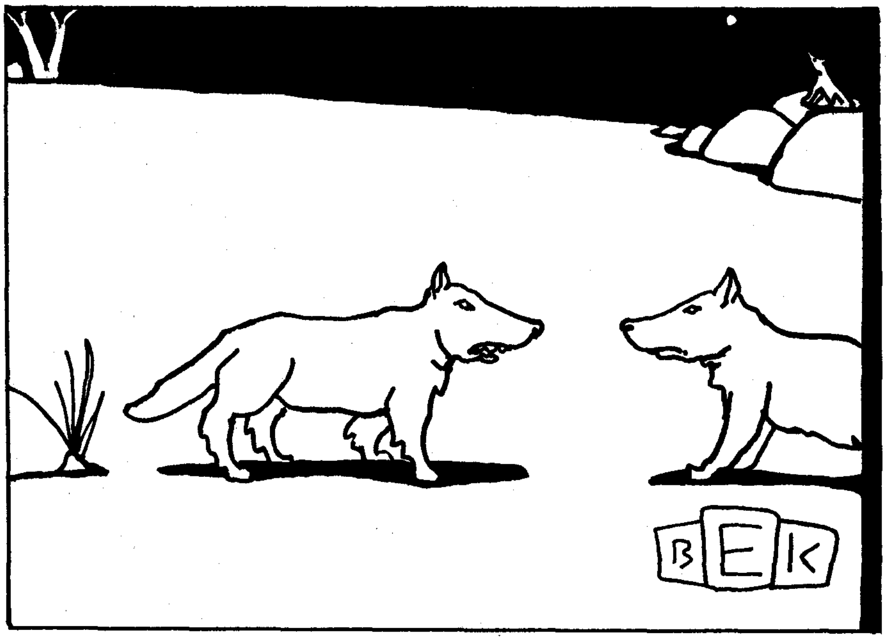
On the morning of September 11, 2001, Khalilzad was in the White House Situation Room, where Condoleezza Rice was chairing a meeting. "There was a TV screen hanging in a corner of the room," Khalilzad told me. "When the first plane hit, we had a sense that, oh, maybe it had lost its way. As soon as the second plane hit, the meeting was called to an end and she rushed away. We went outside the White House to Pennsylvania Avenue and waited awhile till we got the all-clear sign. While we were out, there had been all sorts of rumors and reports, that Capitol Hill had been hit, and the Pentagon, obviously, had been hit. Then we started to look at the intelligence. I started looking at Afghanistan, tracing Al Qaeda."

In the days after September 11th, Khalilzad was involved in discussions about the Administration's response. "It was momentous," Khalilzad said. "I realized that we were now going to get involved in a war and that Afghanistan was the likely theatre. At that moment, the post-Cold War era was being defined. Afghanistan was marginal to U.S. interests, and then became very central, overnight."

Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N. official, told me that he met Khalilzad for the first time during negotiations in Bonn, in December of 2001, to form a post-Taliban coalition government. "We both had a very deep commitment to the people of Afghanistan," he said. "Obviously, I represented the United Nations and he the United States, and each of us came with our own baggage." But Khalilzad, Brahimi said, "has a unique capacity to listen. And also a capacity to pick or to find a common ground between views that, to the casual observer, look totally irreconcilable. A good negotiator listens to the views that are expressed and tries to find a sentence—even a single word—that coincides with the opposite view, and uses that to create a common ground. He can do that."

Another international official who participated in the Bonn negotiations told me, "Brahimi was good cop, and Zal was bad cop. It worked well: Zal was very good about getting on the phone and threatening people. He was comfortable with that kind of use of power."

Several months later, Khalilzad was assigned to organize Iraqi exiles in anticipation of an American invasion. He convened a conference in London, in December, 2002, with delegates from the groups led by Chalabi, Allawi, Barzani, Talabani, and Hakim, among others, and a second in February, 2003, in the Kurdish-held Iraqi town of Salahuddin. Khalilzad travelled in a convoy four hun-



"I don't understand why he'd rather howl at the moon than be with me."

dred kilometres into northern Iraq; he could see Saddam's troops over the line of control.

These talks, and others that followed, were an education for him, he said. Among advocates of the war, there was a debate about whether to install a provisional government of Iraqi opposition figures or to establish an occupation authority with Iraqis in an advisory role. Khalilzad had favored the latter approach, but when he talked to the Iraqis "they were passionately hostile to that. So I then carried a message that this wasn't going to work for us," he said. At one point, the Administration accepted the idea of a provisional government, but around the time Bremer was appointed "the whole game changed," he said. Iraq was placed under U.S.-British trusteeship by a U.N. resolution.

"We were all angry when we found out," Mahdi, the Shiite Vice-President, said. He shrugged, and added, "The American Administration was very confused in those days." Pachachi recalled being summoned by Khalilzad to Baghdad and arriving, in early May, to find him already gone, replaced by Bremer, whom he described as "the Pentagon's man." He added, "I don't think Zal feels Bremer did a very good job here."

Ken Adelman excoriated Paul Bremer as "pretty much a disaster, obviously keener on promoting himself than on promoting Iraqis to govern the country." He and others told me that Bremer rarely talked with Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, his military counterpart, which had negative consequences. By comparison, Khalilzad had a close working relationship with General George Casey, Sanchez's successor as the U.S. commander in Iraq. Casey is an easygoing, bookish man who has presided over most of the major battles in Iraq since the insurgency began in earnest, including the assault on Falluja. He and Khalilzad have adjacent offices in the Embassy, and meet and talk frequently.

In what is left of President Bush's "coalition of the willing," Poland, with fifteen hundred troops, has the fifth-largest contingent in Iraq, after the U.S., Great Britain, South Korea, and Italy. On November 12th, Khalilzad met with Radoslaw Sikorski, Poland's defense minister. Sikorski, who is forty-two, is an Oxford-educated former war correspondent; he took office on October 31st, along with Poland's new conservative Prime Minister, Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz. Sikorski was accompanied by three senior Polish military officers, and by Poland's Ambassador to Iraq, Ryszard Krystosik. General Casey sat in on the meeting as well.

Khalilzad began talking about his plan to establish civilian-military provincial reconstruction teams in Iraq. Such teams had had some success in Afghanistan. He wanted Poland's help, and added, "We hope you'll stay with the coalition. George Casey here is leading our efforts to transfer authority to the Iraqis, but we have no time line. We appreciate the help Poland has given us."

Sikorski informed Khalilzad that Poland's coalition presence in Iraq might not be extended. Ambassador Krystosik lived in Baghdad at considerable risk, and the danger had increased because of a report in the Washington *Post*, a few days earlier, that certain Eastern European countries were hosting secret C.I.A. prisons for terror suspects. Human Rights Watch had named Poland as one of the countries, although Poland had publicly denied it. (I noticed, however, that Sikorski did not dispute the report in his meeting with Khalilzad.) Sikorski believed that Poland's position on Al Qaeda's hit list would now be moved up. His government was angry about the report. Khalilzad responded sympathetically to Poland's concerns.

Keeping the fifteen-hundred-man detachment in Iraq was expensive. Poland's defense budget was six billion dollars; Iraq had already cost two hundred and fifty million.

Khalilzad asked what help the U.S. could give.

Sikorski said that an Iraqi minister had told him that Poland would soon be getting an oil contract. If a second oil contract could be arranged, it would help matters even more. Sikorski also brought up rumors that the U.S. was planning to cut its military assistance to Poland. If true, the news would be disastrous for him and for Poland's Prime Minister. Khalilzad promised to look into that as well.

The discussion turned to what the Polish government was considering in terms of keeping some or all of its troops in Iraq.

Sikorski said that there were two options. The first was a complete withdrawal from Iraq. The second was a scaled-down presence—the option that the Americans preferred.

Before leaving, Sikorski produced the Gold Medal of the Polish Armed Forces, and pinned it on General Casey's lapel as the Polish officers saluted him. Looking a little embarrassed, Casey thanked them.

Khalilzad and Casey are keenly aware of the diminishing support in the U.S. for the war and for the President. Both referred anxiously to the debate "back home" about keeping troops in Iraq. If the U.S. left now, Khalilzad said, "obviously, we know that there would be a civil war, and a civil war could escalate in several ways. One, in which the Kurds would move to take things into their own hands rather than follow what they have agreed to in the constitution. Out of that, regional conflicts could erupt. There's also the possibility that the sectarian war would intensify, and you could have the start of a major long-term Sunni-Shia war that could engulf the entire Middle East. You could also get an Al Qaeda rump state emerging in western Iraq, establishing a caliphate of some kind, a little Talibstan, exporting terrorism—and these scenarios are not mutually exclusive." He added, "But staying the course should not be interpreted to mean that you're staying the course in terms of everything that you're doing."

Later, he said, "We don't do a good job, sometimes, of describing ourselves. I am a Muslim, representing the United States, so it's very hard for people to argue with me that America is against Islam. But we're still at the beginning of developing a relationship of trust, that we will be advocates for reasonable and honorable things." (In another conversation, he said, "I hope that the Iraqis are going to be convinced that we genuinely want them to succeed. But we have a credibility problem in persuading the people that this is the case.")

Khalilzad told me that he and General Casey planned to focus on securing Baghdad. "In terms of the war, and also in terms of getting the psychology of the situation changed back home, if we could secure Baghdad in the next year I think it would gain the confidence of the American people that we know what we are doing." As long as Iraq's capital city remained insecure, public support for the war would continue to erode.

"This one thing, the war on terror, emerged at the very top and as somehow defining our strategy," Khalilzad told me. "What the war on terror may have brought about—if it's done right—is a threat that could keep the superpowers, or the big powers, from going against each other, and get them to coöperate to deal with it. If it's done correctly."

I asked if he felt that 2003 had been the right time to launch the war in Iraq.

He paused and then hedged. "Well, I think there was a case that could have been made to do it when it happened, based on the assessment of information about what was happening with the weapons of mass destruction. And a case could also have been made that, you know, we had time to do it later."

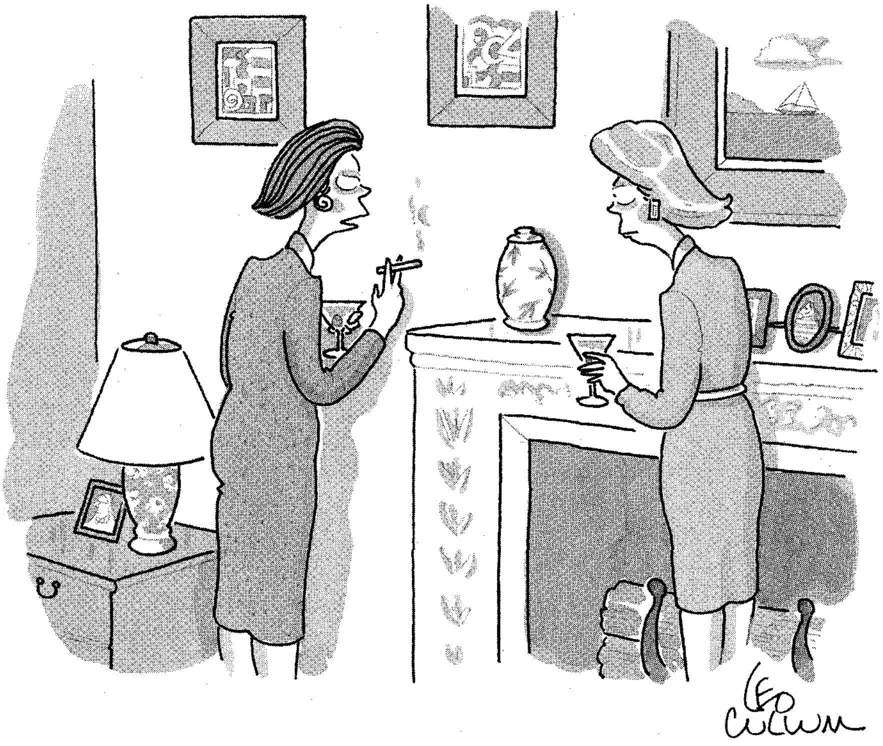
I recalled a conversation in which Khalilzad told me once again that the war in Iraq was "the defining challenge of our time." He had added, "This is a conflict in which the fate of millions of people is at stake; it's not some university exercise." It seemed that he was not so much telling me this as cautioning himself.

In mid-November, Khalilzad flew to Kabul to visit his mother's grave and attend a mourning ceremony for her. She had died almost two weeks earlier.

The fact that Khalilzad's mother had been living in Kabul was a well-guarded secret. She had moved to the United States, where all but one of his siblings had also settled, in 1981, but had returned to Afghanistan in 2004. She had lived there in her own home, and he had quietly visited her, through what he described as "complicated arrangements." When he moved to Baghdad, last summer, his mother, then frail and ailing, had stayed behind. In late October, when he left Baghdad for meetings in Washington, he first made an unannounced stop in Kabul to see her. She died while he was still in the U.S. Khalilzad's high profile, and the risk of an assassination attempt (three Pakistanis who were part of a plot to kill him were captured in Afghanistan earlier this year), meant that he couldn't simply fly to Kabul when he heard the news.

Khalilzad acknowledged that his job often involved running from problem to problem, like a fireman. What was missing, for Khalilzad and the Administration, was a focus on long-term, strategic interests. "I shudder to think what we could face if we don't fix Iraq," he said. "Whatever brought us here, it's engaged us in a way that means it's now about the world. I serve at the pleasure of the President, and if I had to leave Iraq now I would write a memo of the kind that I did in my policy-planning days; I would say, 'Mr. President, here is what you've got. This is going to be your problem. . . .' I always have my resignation letter and a memo in my head. And I always update it. So I am always with my bags packed." He added, "Even our policy people don't really have an adequate appreciation of the consequences and the stakes and the complexities."

He went on, "When we were dealing with the Soviets, we had a lot of Soviet experts writing policy and making policy, but now we are dealing with a part of the world that is so complicated and with so many factors at play. An incredible amount of resources have been allocated to it and will continue to be for years to come. I think that we need to add people, get the very best available. We do have great people at the top—Secretary Rice and the national-security adviser, Stephen Hadley, who think strategically. You know, the Germans say you have a 'fingertip feel'—*Fingerspitzengefühl*—the sense of a place, you know how a place smells, how it feels. A strategist who doesn't have that innate sense about the area he's working on is going to get us in trouble. The U.S. government doesn't have enough people at the top who have that special sense about Iraq and the Middle East on their fingertips. We have the very best people working on it, but, given its importance, we need more." ♦



"Whatever isn't cigarette butts in there is Harold."

ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE INHERITANCE

Can Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., save the Times—and himself?

BY KEN AULETTA

Last month at the Chelsea Piers sports complex, a group that included corporate leaders, bankers, and teachers held a black-tie benefit dinner to celebrate Outward Bound, and to honor the winner of the award named for its founder, Kurt Hahn. The speakers talked about Hahn's belief in a person's "inner strengths," recounted gruelling outdoor experiences, and gave solemn thanks for the sort of campfire encounter sessions they had come to value at Outward Bound. Throughout the evening, people greeted each other with hugs, and even tears; but there was silence when the award for furthering "the Outward Bound mission" was presented to Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., the chairman of the New York Times Company and publisher of the *Times*. Sulzberger was wryly introduced by a friend—"I found his infectious enthusiasm to be irritating when I was dangling over a cliff," she said—and then Sulzberger, a youthful-looking man of fifty-four, bounded to the microphone. With his hands on his hips, and his jacket unbuttoned, Sulzberger recalled how, when he was sixteen, Outward Bound changed his life. He had felt lost and insecure, he said—a child of divorce, shuttling between two homes—and, alone in the wilderness, with the help of Outward Bound mentors, he learned self-reliance. "I've spent a good portion of my life trying to give back to Outward Bound something it gave to me," he said, and spoke of those "I am so blessed to call comrades," and of discovering "the truth about ourselves." His cousin Dan Cohen, who is his closest friend, said, "He was uncertain, as many of us are growing up. Can we handle ourselves in adversity? He had been bounced around. He sort of found a center in this."

Sulzberger can be just as passionate about journalism and the *Times*, the newspaper that his family has controlled since 1896. But there his "infectious enthusiasm" sometimes strikes people as immature or sarcastic. Although he occupies perhaps the most august position in the nation's press establishment, he seems to lack the weighty seriousness of his predecessors, among them Adolph Ochs, the paper's founder; Orvil Dryfoos; and his father, Arthur (Punch) Sulzberger. This was evident on the afternoon of September 29th, when the *Times* reporter Judith Miller was released from a Virginia jail, after being held for eighty-five days because she had refused to name a source. Sulzberger and the paper's executive editor, Bill Keller, waited outside the prison to greet her, but federal marshals wanted Miller to leave in handcuffs and shackles. Suspecting that photographers were waiting, Miller protested; instead, the marshals put her in the back seat of an S.U.V. with tinted windows. The S.U.V. was trailed by Miller's lawyer, Robert Bennett, in one car and Sulzberger and Keller in a second car. When the marshals stopped to let Miller out, Sulzberger told his driver to pull up alongside the S.U.V. He jumped out and, unable to see through the dark glass, excitedly tapped at the back window. "Judy!" he said. "Judy! It's me!"

"Get away from the vehicle, sir!" a marshal said, according to Miller.

Bennett, a veteran of many of Washington's largest legal battles, was surprised. "I said to myself, 'It sure seems odd for the publisher of the New York *Times!*' "

Miller recalled that she was "thrilled to see him," and "so relieved it was over." But, of course, it wasn't over. Within days, fresh criticism of Miller and her reporting began to build at the *Times*, and within weeks her estrangement from Sulzberger and the newspaper was complete. And it was far from over for Sulzberger, whose business decisions and editorial judgment have sometimes been questioned by associates almost from the time that he took over from his father. Gay Talese, who, in

Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. (center), says that,

leagues like Janet Robinson and Bill Keller, he expects the Times to "flourish in a digital age." Photograph by Steve Pyke.

"I can't remember what we're arguing about, either. Let's keep yelling, and maybe it will come back to us."

the sixties, wrote the definitive history of the *Times*, "The Kingdom and the Power," says, "You get a bad king every once in a while."

Twice in the last three years, the *Times* newsroom has suffered the equivalent of a nervous breakdown, and critics say that Sulzberger has managed the latest crisis as poorly as he did the episode involving the fabrications of the reporter Jayson Blair, which led, in 2003, to the firing of Howell Raines, the executive editor. These newsroom crises have come when the *Times* can least afford them—during a period of technological and economic uncertainty that has affected the entire industry. The *Times'* stock price fell 33.2 per cent between December 31, 2004, and October 31, 2005—sixty per cent more than the industry average, according to Merrill Lynch newspaper analysts. The operating profit of the Times Company has also slipped in each of the past three years. Owing to the cost of fuel, newsprint, and employee benefits, expenditures are increasing by between four and five per cent a year and revenues by only about three per cent, a senior *Times* corporate executive says; this person is worried that "it's just a matter of time until we start losing money."

At a newsroom meeting at the end of November, Bill Keller, in a reference to the Miller case and attacks on the *Times* from bloggers, said that he was concerned about "orgies of self-absorption that distract us from our more important work," but most of the questions directed at him did not deal with Miller. "The single most unsettling thing people face now is the economic situation confronting the paper, and not knowing what the future holds," Todd S. Purdum, a Washington correspondent, says. (Purdum recently took the job of national editor at *Vanity Fair*, but he says that the economic situation was not a factor in the decision.) Jennifer Steinhauer, a metro reporter, told me, "I really think the financial issue faced by this company and this industry is the big concern, and not Judith Miller. The health-care fund for Guild employees"—the Newspaper Guild—"went belly up last year, so we had to give up our pay raises to fund it. Our stock options are under water. These are the kinds of things preoccupying people: What's going to happen to this industry?"

For years, the *Times* was accused of arrogance, yet was admired for excellence; no newspaper has won so many prizes or produced such consistently outstanding journalism. Its devotion to quality and its sense of self brought a kind of corporate swagger—a trait that may have vanished in the face of constant crises and repeated self-examination. Within the newsroom, there is a sense of rudderlessness and a fear that a series of business misjudgments may so weaken the company's finances that the brilliance of the *Times*, its news staff of twelve hundred, and, ultimately, the historic mission of the company will be at serious risk. In this crisis of identity, some of the criticism is directed at Keller and his team, for what is seen as a lack of forceful leadership, but the publisher has, fairly or not, become a particular source of concern; one Times Company executive who respects Sulzberger's commitment to journalism considers him no more than a business "figurehead." In late October, a family friend asked, "Is Arthur going to get fired?"

On September 12th, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was invited to a publisher's luncheon at which various *Times* editors and reporters were present. Such events are common in the life of the *Times* and other major newspapers, but this one had an odd start. A security dog that had earlier been sniffing for bombs got sick on the carpet of the room where the lunch was to be held. The mess was cleaned up, but the stench was still noticeable when Rice and her party arrived. The air-conditioning was turned up high to diminish the smell, but it was difficult to hear above the noise. Sulzberger greeted Rice and, according to the transcript posted on the State Department's Web site, began by asking how she thought the United States was "viewed right now by the United Nations," and whether it mattered. "And before you answer that question, just so everybody knows," he said, "it's pretty loud in this room, so my apologies. The bomb-sniffing dog threw up here." Everyone laughed, but Sulzberger continued to apologize, and, as some of the reporters present cringed, Rice finally said, "Thank you for sharing that."

Several minutes later, during a discussion about the incarceration in China of a *Times* employee, Rice said that she and President Bush planned to raise this issue when Bush visited China. "Thank you for that," Sulzberger said. "Have you seen Judy Miller lately? Perhaps President Bush can help with that one." Once more, *Times* editors and reporters winced.

One often hears it said that Sulzberger lacks sufficient gravitas for a man in his position, which is perhaps another way of saying that he is still more a prince than a mature king. Sulzberger's hair has begun to turn gray and to recede, and yet, like Tom Hanks in the movie "Big," he seems to be only impersonating an older man. He is often known as Young Arthur, and, behind his back, people still call him Pinch, in contrast to his father, Punch. He tends to draw attention to himself with a loud cackle or an awkwardly offhand remark. He keeps in his office artifacts of his two hobbies—a wooden sculpture of a beloved motorcycle and sculptures of rock climbers.

But his preoccupation has been the *Times*, which he may have been destined to run from the time he was born. As Susan E. Tifft and Alex S. Jones recount in "The Trust," their authoritative history of the family, when he was five his parents divorced; he and his sister, Karen, lived with their mother, who soon remarried, and spent two weekends a month with Punch. In 1970, Arthur enrolled at Tufts, where he studied political science and international relations and thought about entering the family business one day. While he was in college, his mother married for a third time and settled in Topeka, Kansas, where he met and fell in love with Gail Gregg, the daughter of a neighbor. Gail, like Arthur, was fascinated by journalism, and two months later she went to Boston to live with him. After he graduated, in June, 1974, they moved to North Carolina, where Punch helped get Arthur a job as a general-assignment reporter for the Raleigh *Times* and Gail went to graduate school in journalism. They married the following year, and in 1976 the elder Sulzberger helped Arthur and Gail find reporting jobs in London, he with the Associated Press, she with United Press International.

Two years later, starting his apprenticeship in the family business, Arthur, Jr., joined the *Times* as a reporter in the Washington bureau. He and Gail became friendly with a number of reporters there—particularly Steven Rattner, Judith Miller, Steven Weisman, Philip Taubman, and Felicity Barringer. (Rattner and Miller once shared a summer house with the Sulzbergers and other friends.) Charles Kaiser, then a reporter for the *Times*, says of Arthur, "He was the charming young father who brought his baby boy to a party on his shoulders. He made a real effort to be one of the boys." Everyone knew that he might succeed his father, but he did not flaunt his position. After three years in Washington, the young Sulzbergers and their son, Arthur Gregg, moved to New York, where Arthur became a general-assignment reporter on the metro desk. A year later, he became an assistant metro editor, and in 1982 he moved to the business side of the paper. Sulzberger was made assistant publisher in 1987 and deputy publisher the following year, reporting directly to his father. As he came closer to succeeding his father, he began to tell people that he would never tolerate an authoritarian newsroom, as he believed his father had under the executive editor A. M. Rosenthal, and that he would cut off his personal friendships at the paper. (Rattner, who remains a close friend and adviser, escaped the ban, having left the *Times* in 1982 to become an investment banker.) He became publisher in January, 1992, and, in 1997, when Punch stepped down as chairman, his son succeeded him in that post, too.

Where Punch Sulzberger was reserved, Arthur, Jr., was voluble. Punch did not make his politics public; Arthur, Jr., leaned to the left (he had been vehemently opposed to the Vietnam War, and was arrested more than once at protest rallies). John F. Akers, a former chairman and C.E.O. of I.B.M., who has been a *Times* board member since 1985, says, "Punch has a dry sense of humor, ironic, sardonic. Arthur's humor is very different. He's a little quick with the gun." Whatever their stylistic differences, they had the same values where the paper was concerned. Arthur, Jr., believed that his father had saved the newspaper by attracting new readers and advertisers, and he admired his father's courage in defying the Nixon Administration to publish the Pentagon Papers, in 1971.

The new publisher, however, had his own management ideas. He thought that the corporate culture was inbred and in need of more diversity—more women, more minorities, more gays. (Charles Kaiser, who is gay, says, "When he came in, gays in the newsroom lived in terror, and Arthur met them and took each of them to lunch and said, 'What is it like to be gay here? When I take over, it will no longer be a problem.' He transformed the institution from the most homophobic institution in America to the most gay-friendly institution.")

In 1992, Arthur, Jr., named Howell Raines, the Washington bureau chief, as editorial-page editor. He wanted a livelier, more assertive, populist page—a departure for the *Times*, where the editorial pages had been staid and often predictable. In 1994, he promoted Joseph Lelyveld, then the managing editor, to executive editor, succeeding Max Frankel. When it was Lelyveld's turn to retire, in 2001, Sulzberger arranged for Bill Keller, then the managing editor, and Raines to compete for the position.

Keller, whom Sulzberger didn't know as well as he did Raines, was Lelyveld's preferred candidate and promised continuity. Raines, a more charismatic and high-spirited figure than Keller, though not his equal as a correspondent, appealed to Sulzberger's sense of mission. He promised to boost business, sports, and cultural coverage, and to attract more readers from *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal;* he wanted to bring more diversity into the newsroom, and intended to appoint Gerald Boyd, who is black, managing editor. Raines energized Arthur, Jr., in a way that Keller did not. Raines won allies on the business side by promising to raise the "competitive metabolism" of the news staff, suggesting that the newsroom could work harder. In the end, there was little mystery to the race and even less competition: Sulzberger chose Raines; Keller returned to writing, with an Op-Ed column and regular magazine stories.

Raines moved into his new office the

week before the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and, over the next six months or so, the newsroom excelled and its work was recognized with a record-breaking seven Pulitzer Prizes. Judith Miller shared an award for explanatory reporting with six other reporters for the paper's coverage. Her reporting on attempts by terrorists to gain access to weapons of mass destruction, and, later, on Saddam Hussein's alleged hidden weapons programs, was often featured on the front page. Privately, some editors and reporters complained that Miller relied too much on Administration sources—that, in the words of one editor, "she was a vacuum cleaner of information" but "a poor judge of what she had." Raines and his team generally ignored such complaints and, whether that was the intent or not, W.M.D. stories in the *Times* shielded Raines from the charge that he was too liberal.

Sulzberger's first major newsroom crisis began in the spring of 2003, when Jayson Blair's fabrications came to light. What might have been no more than a major embarrassment at another newspaper caused a firestorm that involved not only Blair, who was dismissed, but also Raines, who was accused of being too hellbent on scoops and, above all, of creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that eclipsed Rosenthal's last years. Sulzberger defended Raines, who had held the job for less than two years, but, in order to air the issue, he rented a theatre on West Forty-fourth Street and invited the *Times* staff to question Raines, Gerald Boyd, and himself.

As the three men took their places onstage, Sulzberger was holding a mysterious bag. He told the story of a *Times* business retreat where a moose had been lurking outside the window but wasn't mentioned by any of the executives present. He then pulled from the bag a stuffed toy moose, held it up, and urged his employees to discuss any "moose issues"—meaning the most obvious issues that people were wary of confronting. This was the closest that many in the newsroom had ever got to Sulzberger, and the moose gesture was widely viewed as a clumsy prank at the worst possible moment—neither a joke nor a parable. "The day with the moose ended it," a senior correspondent at the paper said. "That was the day you said, 'This guy is tone deaf.' "

Within weeks, Sulzberger had become convinced that Raines could not rescue himself or the situation, and Raines was fired. For Keller, the Raines era was harmful in a less obvious way, and he remains bitter about it. Keller, who is fifty-six, speaks slowly and deliberately, but his candor can be as jarring as Sulzberger's humor. The business and news sides of newspapers, he told me last month, always have "an ambient level of suspicion" toward each other. The business side has trouble applying "traditional business metrics to what we do," he said. "On the business side, there is a tendency to suspect that the newsroom is hiding something behind a lot of smoke and mirrors. This is a perception Howell fed. Of all the things Howell bequeathed to me, somewhere high on that list—maybe higher than Judy Miller—is his claim that the newsroom had become fat and complacent. That plays into what business sides of newspapers tend to believe. I think that was wrong. I think the reason he made that case was cynical.... I don't think he really believed it. I think he thought it would make him popular with the business side." Keller also said he did not believe that Sulzberger chose Raines for that reason. But he added, "Howell campaigned for the job with the political skills we admire in Karl Rove."

Raines, in an e-mail response, said, "It was well known throughout the paper that I believed the *Times* needed to improve its journalism and its business practices. It still does—witness the declining stock price. Any reasonable person who read my editorial page could see that I did not pander to business or economic interests, inside or outside the paper. Bill knows that the cynicism, if any, ran the other way. Joe Lelyveld tried to cast me as a candidate of the business side in hopes of improving Bill's standing in the newsroom. My own view is that an editor in today's environment who doesn't understand the economics of the newspaper business is under-informed." Lelyveld declined to comment, saying, "I don't want to get involved in old New York *Times* debates."

The newsroom generally likes and respects Keller—he was one of the best foreign correspondents in the paper's history—but some people had seen him as aloof and, at times, given to strange jokes. When Dean Baquet, a former colleague who had become managing editor of the Los Angeles *Times,* was trying to hire away some of his reporters, Keller told the Washington *Post's* Howard Kurtz that Baquet "has this habit of telling recruits there's something in the New York water that makes your penis fall off." A *Times* editor says of Keller, "He's a bit of a loner. He spends a lot of time in his office." Nor did Keller have an easy rapport with his publisher. In the two years that he was a columnist, he told a friend, they rarely spoke. In the months after Keller succeeded Raines, Sulzberger told friends that he thought Keller was holding back, as if he still resented not being chosen the first time. "We started out without much of a relationship at all and with a certain wariness of each other," Keller told me, but it wasn't "a question of whether Arthur and I like each other. I think we do."

The painful and demoralizing episode involving Judith Miller—Sulzberger's recent crisis on the news side—began on July 14, 2003, when the syndicated columnist Robert Novak revealed the name of an undercover C.I.A. agent, Valerie Plame. Plame is married to Joseph C. Wilson IV, a former career State Department official, who that spring and summer had been questioning the Bush Administration's assertion that Iraq was seeking material to build nuclear weapons—an assertion that the White House withdrew around the time of the Novak column. Because revealing the identity of an undercover agent violates a 1982 national-security act, the Justice Department began to investigate whether members of the Bush Administration had knowingly done so, and eventually chose Patrick Fitzgerald as special counsel. Among the reporters Fitzgerald asked to testify were two from the Washington *Post;* Tim Russert, of NBC; Matt Cooper, of *Time;* and Judith Miller, who had never written about Wilson or his wife but had closely followed the question of Iraq's weapons program. In the following days and weeks, the Washington *Post* and NBC came to decide that this was no case on which to make a First Amendment stand, but *Time* and the *Times* chose to resist the subpoenas from Fitzgerald's grand jury; Miller and Cooper refused to testify, saying that they could not break pledges of confidentiality to sources.

The case became a heartfelt cause for Sulzberger, who relied on the First Amendment attorney Floyd Abrams, as did Time Inc. Thomas F. Hogan, the chief U.S. district-court judge, held Cooper and Miller in civil contempt for refusing to testify. In early 2005, Sulzberger invited officials from Time Inc.—including Norman Pearlstine, then the editor-in-chief; his deputy, John Huey; and Matt Cooper—to meet with him, the *Times'* C.E.O., Janet Robinson; its communications chief, Catherine Mathis; *Times* lawyers; and Judith Miller to discuss strategy. Only Robin Bierstedt, an associate general counsel at Time Inc., and Dawn Bridges, the senior vice-president for corporate communications, showed up, with instructions from Pearlstine to listen politely and make no commitments.

Sulzberger began by saying, "We need people to understand what this means. We need passion." Bridges asked whether the audience was the courts, the public, or the special counsel. "Everyone," Sulzberger responded. He talked about holding joint press conferences, and mounting an advertising campaign. Then, with Miller taking notes, Sulzberger pulled from an envelope a bunch of small white buttons with writing in red, blue, and black—"Free Judy. Free Matt. Free Speech"—and passed them around. Nearly a year later, senior executives at Time Inc. still shake their heads when recounting this story. "He wanted to do the right thing, but he seemed naïve," one executive said. "He was earnest, and he was admirable," Judith Miller said.

Last February, after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled unanimously against Miller and Cooper, Sulzberger and *Time* decided to appeal to the Supreme Court. At the annual meeting of Times Company shareholders in April, Sulzberger said, "When we consider the many complex issues that we face at home and abroad, it is hard to imagine a more inopportune moment to restrain our access to information. . . . When individuals do speak to us, confidentially, they do so knowing we will protect their identity."

Miller still considered Sulzberger to be her champion, but she also had reasons to be wary. Matthew Mallow, a friend of hers who is a senior partner at the law firm Skadden, Arps, advised her to get her own attorney, someone with a background in criminal law. Sulzberger agreed to pay for a lawyer, and Miller eventually chose Robert Bennett, of Skadden, Arps, who was Bill Clinton's personal attorney and had defended him in the Monica Lewinsky case. At the same time, Miller felt growing hostility from Keller and many colleagues in the newsroom. This had started a year earlier, when Keller and Jill Abramson, the managing editor, ran an editors' note acknowledging that some of the *Times'* reporting on Iraq's W.M.D.s—including several stories written by Miller—was "not as rigorous as it should have been." Keller and Abramson spent hours going over past stories, trying to judge where Miller's reporting was thin or just plain wrong. They had telephone and e-mail exchanges with several *Times* reporters, few of whom were pleased at the prospect of being second-guessed. But Miller, Keller recalled, "was defensive, unrelentingly sure of her positions, and unwilling to be perceived as someone who wrote 'bad stories.' "

Miller, for her part, asked why no one blamed editors like Raines, and others, "who knew all of my sources." (Raines, in an e-mail, said, "I did not know Judy's sources. At the time, I followed the customary *Times* practice of relying on the supervising desk editor—in this case, most often the Washington editor and the foreign editor—to make sure the sourcing on the stories they handled was correct. I questioned reporters directly on some stories out of the Pentagon, but, to my regret, I did not do so on these stories. As many journalism critics have noted, the *Times* has yet to reveal what editors among present staff members were directly involved in assigning and editing Judy Miller's stories. Scapegoating Judy or anyone else does not erase their responsibility to tell their readers the full truth in this matter.") "I should have left the paper after the editors' note," Miller says. "The reason I didn't is that weeks afterward, I got a subpoena. . . . I knew I couldn't fight on my own." (A disclosure: My wife, a literary agent, represents both Keller and Miller.)

Miller asked why Keller wouldn't allow her to do more reporting to uncover why the *Times* had been wrong. Keller was

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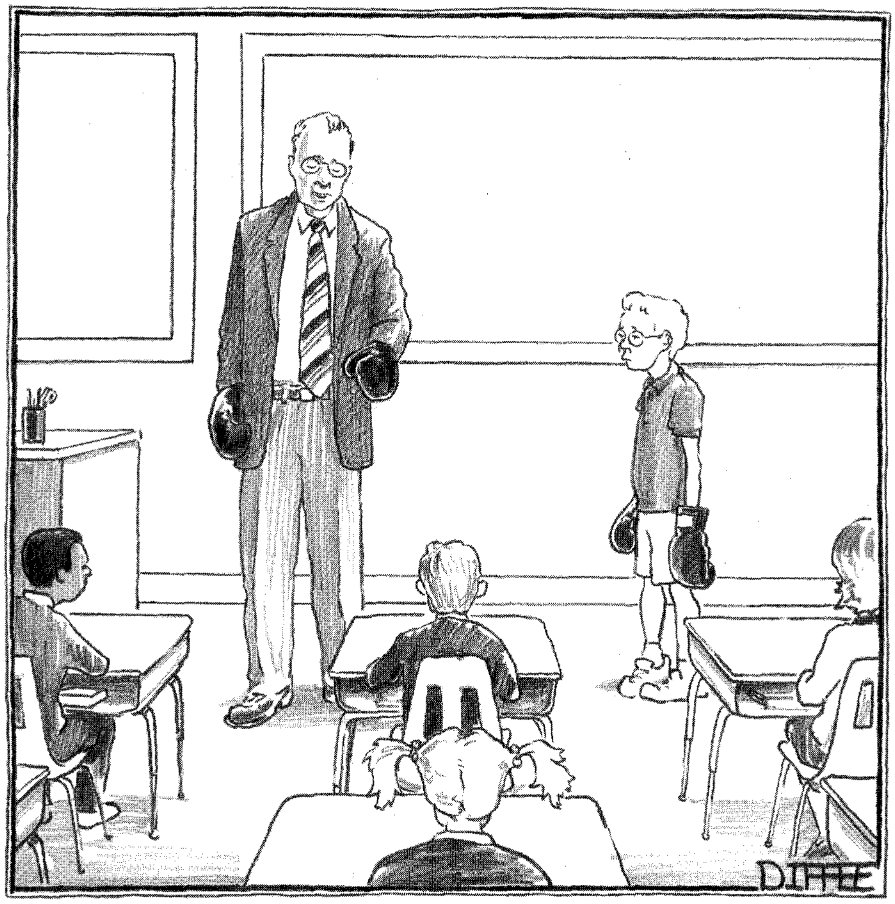
weary of the battles he had fought with Miller over the editors' note; even when he thought she had agreed, he said, Miller would return and recycle every argument. And even after he and Abramson thought that they had restricted Miller's reporting, she persisted. Late one night in 2004, Miller called Keller at home from the home of an Iraqi exile, Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri. "He was one of the most famous products of Ahmad Chalabi's intelligence factory," Keller said, referring to the Iraqi opposition leader. "Someone who had specifically been a source in one of Judy's discredited W.M.D. stories." Keller was astonished. "She was calling me up to say, 'I'm at Haideri's house. They're going to deport him. I'm the only one who can report this story.' It was just unmistakable that she saw her role here as partly the author of a great scoop, but also someone who was way too invested in her sources." Keller told her to leave Haideri's house. (Miller refused to comment on this incident.)

Keller was also having second thoughts about the legal case. The doubts started, he says, in the fall of 2004, when it became clear that the Washington *Post* did not see Fitzgerald's investigation as a First Amendment issue, and that the *Post's* longtime national-security reporter, Walter Pincus, was going to coöperate. Keller described Pincus as "a guy who lives and dies on anonymous sources, and who I could not see doing something to ruin his credibility with people who tell him stuff—that gave me pause. But I breezed past it." A second pause came after the Court of Appeals ruled against the *Times*. He said, "At that point, I should have gone into the room and said, 'Listen, guys, the lawyers aren't very optimistic. There is even some potential danger that the Supreme Court would seize on this case for an opportunity to make things even worse" for the press. "I never made that pitch," he said. The reason? "An object in motion," he said, "tends to stay in motion."

In retrospect, it seems that neither Keller nor Sulzberger asked enough questions about Miller's interaction with her source, Vice-President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis (Scooter) Libby, or with her editors. The Supreme Court declined to review the Appeals Court ruling, and, three days later, Norman Pearlstine complied with a subpoena to turn over Time Inc.'s e-mails and records; in July, Cooper said that his source had released him from any confidentiality pledge, and he appeared before the grand jury. Sulzberger said that he was "deeply disappointed" in the *Time* decision; Miller, still refusing to testify—with Sulzberger's continuing support—was ordered to report to the Alexandria Detention Center, in northern Virginia, until she testified, or until the term of the grand jury expired, in late October.



"O.K., class, today we're going to learn about survival of the fittest."

In Robert Bennett's view, Sulzberger caused problems for his client. "I don't know what advice he got from his lawyers, but he was very gung-ho," Bennett said of Sulzberger. "He was pushing Judy"—to not bend on principle. "When I raised issues—'Shouldn't we check on the waiver thing?'"—that is, on whether Libby genuinely had no objection to Miller's revealing her source—"they were resistant to raising that issue." Bennett was astonished that Keller and Sulzberger had not inspected Miller's notebook. He said, "How could the *Times* have embarked on this venture without knowing all of the facts?" Floyd Abrams, the newspaper's attorney, rejects the suggestion that he and the *Times* and Miller were swept up by a righteous stand on behalf of an abstract principle; he said that he had briefed Keller and Sulzberger on the notebook's contents. "The first time I met Judy on this case, the first thing she said was 'Somebody has to fight back against Fitzgerald,'" Abrams said. "I'm not trying to escape responsibility, but Judy was a very active client. It seems to me that if you don't continually ask, 'What is the principle you're trying to establish?,' there is nothing left to defend." Miller's legal fees eventually cost the company about $1.5 million, a senior official said.

By late August, Miller, who had spent nearly sixty days in jail, had become frustrated with the *Times;* she was upset that the paper had not run more stories about her imprisonment, although it did publish fourteen editorials championing her cause. Meanwhile, Bennett warned her that Fitzgerald could keep her in jail longer by impanelling a new grand jury, or by bringing a criminal-contempt action. Bennett had argued that he should ask Libby if he would release Miller from her pledge of confidentiality, and should “reach out to Fitzgerald to see if he would narrow his scope to one source.” After studying Miller’s notebook, Bennett concluded that there was only one source—Libby. When Fitzgerald agreed to limit his questions accordingly, that made it easier for Miller, who said, “We feared Fitzgerald wanted my entire notebook, and all my sources.” Miller says that Bennett, with Fitzgerald’s encouragement, arranged a telephone conversation with Libby, and became convinced that Libby genuinely wanted her to testify. If Libby hadn’t waived the pledge of confidentiality, she said, “I would have stayed in jail.”

When Miller was released, on September 29th, Sulzberger arranged for her to stay at the Ritz-Carlton Georgetown, get a massage and a manicure, and have a steak dinner. Bennett objected, saying that he wanted to prepare her immediately for the grand-jury session the next morning. Sulzberger insisted that she deserved a celebration, and Miller sided with him. At the dinner, which was attended by Sulzberger, Keller, the former *Times* Op-Ed columnist William Safire, Miller, and her husband, the former Random House editor Jason Epstein, the publisher presented Miller with a bronzed *Times* medallion. “It was very special,” Miller told me, eyes tearing as she recounted the moment. “Very few of them were given.” Sulzberger now describes the medal as “a trinket,” one that his father sometimes gave to retiring *Times* employees; it appears that by this time Arthur, Jr., saw Miller, who had been at the newspaper for twenty-eight years, as an ex-*Times* employee.

There was no discussion at dinner, or in the coming days, of Miller’s future at the *Times*. Miller assumed that after a decent interval she would return to the newspaper. She did not know that Sulzberger, Keller, Jill Abramson, and Janet Robinson had held a series of discussions while she was in jail and, according to two of the principals, decided that her career at the *Times* was over. “The decision was that she was not going to work with words again,” one of the participants said. Another person recalled that they “were all in agreement that she could never again be a reporter for the *Times*, and that the best course would be that she should leave the paper.”

They had discussed firing her, but this could have led to endless litigation, which the *Times* might lose; they could “negotiate a severance deal”; or they could “put her in a job where she would be genuinely contained”—for instance, assign her to the News Service division, part of the business department, and on another floor. The third option was so “draconian”—such a clear and public statement of a loss of confidence in her work as a reporter—that they hoped even its suggestion would “help steer Judy toward a severance deal.”

Keller, meanwhile, did what Howell Raines had done after the Jayson Blair episode: he ordered up a long investigative piece. As had happened before, blame was assigned mostly to the reporter and not to *Times* editors. The article appeared on the front page on October 16th. It explained that Keller had taken Miller off Iraq and national-security stories but that “she kept kind of drifting on her own back into the national security realm”; suggested that she had misled the Washington bureau chief, Philip Taubman, when he asked her about the Plame leak; and also noted that she had referred to herself as “Miss Run Amok.” Keller, in an e-mail to the staff from Asia—where, to the bafflement of many, he was in the midst of a long-scheduled visit to *Times* bureaus—tried to explain why the *Times* had taken more than a year to explain its W.M.D. reporting mistakes, something that might have demonstrated that the paper was not “putting the defense of the reporter above the duty to its readers.” And he created more problems by adding, “If I had known the details of Judy’s entanglement with Libby, I’d have been more careful in how the paper articulated its defense.” What was not known then was that Keller had first sent a draft of this note to Sulzberger and his two managing editors, and no one had flagged the word “entanglement,” with its implications of a sexual liaison—a particularly sensitive issue because of what Maureen Dowd in a later *Times* column called Miller’s “tropism toward powerful men.” Miller was furious at the insinuation that she was having an affair with Libby. She was almost as angry with the *Times*’ public editor, Byron Calame, for writing that she had been guilty of taking “journalistic shortcuts,” and had received “deferential treatment” from her editors. Dowd, in her column, concluded that if Miller were to return to the newsroom to cover “threats to our country” the “institution most in danger would be the newspaper in your hands.”

While Sulzberger couldn’t have been expected to censor the Dowd column, Miller’s friends wondered why he didn’t ask someone to change the headline, “WOMAN OF MASS DESTRUCTION.” (Sulzberger told me, “I did not know of Maureen’s column on Judy before it ran.”) When the *Times* wanted Miller to write a first-person account of her grand-jury testimony, as Matt Cooper had done for *Time*, she objected, saying that Robert Bennett had advised against it, because it might antagonize Fitzgerald. Keller himself, she said, told her that she had to. By this time, Miller had stopped calling Sulzberger “my savior.” Although she will not criticize Sulzberger or discuss aspects of what happened, she does say, reluctantly, “He was there solidly—until he wasn’t.”

For a time, Miller apparently did not realize that Sulzberger had turned on her, but, soon after the October 16th account appeared, Matthew Mallow said, “Arthur told her she was not coming back as a reporter.” Before Miller would leave the paper, however, she demanded a significant severance package; the publication of a letter to the editor in which she would clarify her position and take issue with assertions made by both Keller and Calame; and a public apology from Keller. If Keller did not retract the “entanglement” claim, she threatened to sue him and the *Times* for defamation.

Keller made public a personal letter he had written to Miller in which he regretted choosing words suggesting “an improper relationship” with Libby, and asserting that she had “misled” Taubman, but he also noted, without elaboration, “I continue to be troubled by that episode.” In the end, by mutual consent, neither the *Times* nor Miller would discuss the terms of her agreement.

The day after Miller’s departure was announced, last month, Sulzberger appeared for an hour on the Charlie Rose show, and deflected Rose’s questions about Miller and *Times* mistakes. He said that morale at the paper is “doing just great,” we need “to move on,” “We’re now past it,” “That’s over now”—prompting Jack Shafer, the media critic for the online magazine *Slate*, to write, "Sulzberger's jabber differs not one whit from the standard bullshit—'Move along folks, there's nothing here to see'—issued by every politician and corporate leader who finds himself trapped in the media's crosshairs." Sulzberger kept trying to steer the discussion to the First Amendment: "Let's go back to why Judy went to jail. Because this has become so intertwined. And it almost makes her time of eighty-five days in jail seem as though it was a sideshow, when it was the main ring." When it came to Miller herself or the newsroom, though, Sulzberger kept avoiding questions, so insistently that at one point Rose, who is usually a model of bonhomie, practically exploded with frustration.

Several days later, I met Judy Miller for breakfast. She wore sunglasses, and looked pale and unusually thin. Gesticulating with both hands, she said, "I don't know what the list of alleged journalistic shortcomings are, because the ones the *Times* listed have now all been shown to have been bogus, or the result of spite—envy—by former colleagues . . . or were apologized for or clarified by Bill Keller when I left. I mean, I did not 'mislead' anyone, it turns out. I did not have, quote, entanglements with Scooter Libby. The journalistic, quote, shortcuts I was alleged to have taken"—agreeing to identify Libby, who had once worked on Capitol Hill, as a "former Hill staffer"—"I never took. So the question is: What did I do? What did I do? I interviewed Scooter Libby and I got information for a story I wanted to do that I never wrote, was not permitted to explore. So I went to jail to protect a source, and then I came out of jail because I was persuaded he wanted me to testify."

Of her W.M.D. stories, she said, "I was wrong because my sources were wrong"—more than she conceded at the time of the editors' note. But, aside from faulting herself for being wrong about W.M.D.s and for not doing a better job of explaining her decision to testify, Miller accepted no blame. She did not admit the possibility that her sources, among them Ahmad Chalabi, might have been not only wrong but also skilled at manipulating her. She said she hoped that what she had done "raised the bar and will make government think before putting a journalist in jail. I hope I will be known as a reporter who helped get a federal shield law. I fear that the *Times*' betrayal of me may have weakened that."

POSSESSION

Nesting in my nest, she slept on my side
of the double bed, stacked the books—*my* books—
she was reading on my nightstand.
In the closet, her dresses pressed
against my husband's pants.
These I boxed up for her mother,
with the baby's toys.
I tossed her blue toothbrush
and her tortoiseshell comb in the trash.
Police took away a rug. My two best knives.

But the kitchen still smells of her spices—
her cinnamon, curry, cloves.
The house an aromatic maze
of incense and sachet.
Almost every day now something of hers
turns up. The way La Brea tar pits
keep disgorging ancient bones, squeezing them
through the oily black muscles of earth
to the surface.

A yoga mat.
I don't need it. I already have my own.
Prayer beads. A strapless bra.
A gold ring. It's pretty.
It fits my pinkie.

I wash my face with her special soap,
a cool oval of white clay,
one thick black hair still glued to it.
And is it wrong to brew her herbal teas, try her
aromatherapies, her homeopathic cures,
the Rescue Remedy she'd told me
really worked? The amber bottle's full.
Why waste it? So I deposit
four bitter drops on my own tongue.

—Jane Shore

Libby, who was indicted on October 28th for perjury, making false statements, and obstruction of justice, may call Miller and other journalists as witnesses. "If this thing goes to trial," Keller said, "it could be an ugly spectacle, and not something that will be uplifting or help the credibility of the news profession." When I asked Floyd Abrams to assess whether the case advanced the cause he has championed, he said that "it was worth fighting," but he added, "This case is a no-win situation for the press. The only question is how to do the least harm." He said, "Sometimes we have to force the courts to rule. Only a willingness to fight when necessary makes possible some sort of victory in the courts, or some sort of protection from Congress."

I later asked Sulzberger what the *Times* had accomplished. "We stood up for a value that is core to this company," he said, and added, "I did not embrace this. It was given to us. I just chose not to walk away from it—I didn't feel the need for a Pentagon Papers case." He also said, "My job is simple. My job is to work with Janet Robinson and Bill Keller and all of our colleagues and turn this great company, this institution, into something that will flourish in a digital age. I'm going to be judged on that. I'm not going to be judged on this story or that."

Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., will be judged on his over-all stewardship of the New York Times Company, and, perhaps inevitably, he has now become a target, in much the way that Howell Raines was. On October 25th, Arianna Huffington wrote on her Web site, "More and more, it's looking like the biggest problem at the *Times* is not a Judy Miller problem—it's an Arthur Sulzberger problem." A *Times* correspondent, faulting him for being rash in the way he had wholeheartedly supported Miller, said, "Arthur believes in the public trust. I respect him for it. But I keep thinking of Othello, who, looking back on his life, described himself this way: 'One that loved not wisely but too well.'" An old friend said, "He's not a very nuanced person." Most people, the friend added, "learn to see things in grays as they get older," but Arthur, Jr., still tends to see things "as black and white." And he still, remarkably, seems drawn to corporate whimsies like the toy moose. "That's a part of my personality, and sometimes I control it better than at other times," he said. "This is a tough job and part of my defense—and part of me—is that I have a sense of humor. That probably explains my motorcycle. Sometimes it comes out in ways where I should show more seriousness. But I enjoy life and fun. During difficult times, a sense of humor is an important valve."

Recent events have weighed on him, though. Steven Rattner, who meets Sulzberger at five-forty-five several mornings a week at a gym, said, "There were one or two days he said, 'I can't come tomorrow. Too much stress.'" Sulzberger has reason to feel that critics have overlooked the principled stand he took on behalf of the newsroom, and also the investment he continues to make in order to produce what arguably remains the world's finest newspaper.

The *Times*, for instance, under his leadership, has accelerated its spending on the national edition, and has planned twenty-seven printing plants to be operating by 2006 (up from twenty-one), which would make possible later deadlines and quicker distribution of the paper. The national edition has allowed the *Times* to become one of the few American newspapers with consistent circulation gains; between 1998 and 2004, while the paper's local circulation followed the industry trend and fell, nationwide daily circulation rose ten per cent, to 1.1 million readers. Since *Times* readers tend to be better educated and younger, and have higher incomes than the average newspaper reader, they appeal to advertisers, and the *Times* is today the only newspaper that generates more than a billion dollars a year in advertising.

At Sulzberger's prodding, the *Times* in 1996 started NYTimes.com, the on-line edition of the newspaper. Today, it is the world's most heavily trafficked newspaper Web site, drawing nearly twenty-two million visitors a month. (The C.E.O. of the Washington Post Company, Donald Graham, who has had his disagreements with Sulzberger, says, "The most important thing he is doing to position the *Times* for the future is developing NYTimes.com into the biggest and most financially successful Web site developed by a media company.") In 2002, the *Times* spent seventy-five million dollars to acquire approximately a one-sixth ownership share of the Boston Red Sox, Fenway Park, and the New England Sports Network, which carries the Red Sox games. The same year, the company spent a hundred million dollars to acquire half ownership of a digital cable network—now called Discovery Times—from Discovery Communications.

The center of the company, though, remains its newspapers, including the Boston *Globe*, for which Punch Sulzberger paid $1.1 billion in 1993—overpaid, some analysts said at the time. Last year, the Times Company generated just under three hundred million dollars of profits on $3.3 billion in revenues, and ninety-five per cent of its revenue came from print—the *Times*, the *Globe*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and fifteen regional papers, and their Internet offshoots. The *Times* was active on the corporate side as well. In 2000, it forged a real-estate partnership to build a new headquarters for the paper across from the Port Authority Bus Terminal. After a competition, the *Times* chose the architect Renzo Piano and announced that it would move in 2007. The company had to raise more than five hundred million dollars to finance the building, which put a further squeeze on its resources. In late 2002, with the enthusiastic support of Raines, the *Times*, which, jointly with the Washington *Post*, owned the *International Herald Tribune*, announced that, for sixty-five million dollars, it would buy the *Post's* fifty-per-cent stake. Donald Graham was angry; he felt that he had been muscled out of the partnership. Privately, some *Post* executives compared Sulzberger to the television mobster Tony Soprano. In a public statement, Graham, joined by the publisher, Boisfeuillet Jones, Jr., and the executive editor, Leonard Downie, Jr., said, "This decision was made with great reluctance and sadness—and little choice. . . . If the *Post* did not sell, the *Times* said it would start its own international edition anyway."

In Sulzberger's view, the *Tribune* "was a declining asset"—losing six to eight million dollars a year—and, "with the joint ownership it had, no one was going to take the steps necessary" for it to compete with the European edition of the *Wall Street Journal* and with the *Financial Times*. The *Times* seemed equally certain that the name of the paper should be changed to the *International New York Times*. "It was surely a strongly held view," Michael Golden, a Sulzberger cousin who now serves as the *Tribune's* publisher and is also vice-chairman of the Times Company, says. But the company had done little due diligence; Golden said that, months after the acquisition, market research

revealed that the *Times* was perceived as an American paper and the *Tribune* as international. The company, Golden said, has added color pages, more marketing dollars, and about eighteen reporters to the European and Asian *Tribune* staff, and a Hong Kong office. Because of these investments, Janet Robinson, the C.E.O., says, "the losses are larger than they were"—about twenty-five million dollars this year, an executive who knows the numbers said. Graham so far seems to have got the best of the bargain.

According to Martin A. Nisenholtz, who is responsible for the company's Internet holdings, online ventures have produced a profit in the past three years. In September, Nisenholtz launched TimesSelect, which charges $49.95 a year for nonsubscribers to gain access to *Times* columnists and the paper's archive. There were complaints inside the paper; columnists like Dowd and Thomas Friedman, who had developed large, loyal readerships online, were said to be unhappy about the new arrangement. It is still too early to judge the financial success of this venture; in November, the company announced that it had recruited about a hundred and thirty-five thousand TimesSelect subscribers in its first two months. TimesSelect has been helped by a deal that Sulzberger negotiated in 1994 to reclaim something that the *Times* had sold: exclusive digital rights to the paper's archive, which can still be retrieved from LexisNexis. Sulzberger said, "We had basically signed away our rights in perpetuity. . . . We found a window to get out of it, and we jumped through it. Could you imagine us not owning our morgue?"

Since March, the *Times* has acquired two Internet companies and shares in two others. The largest of these acquisitions was About.com, for which it paid $410 million. The site offers visitors the services of five hundred on-staff "guides" who will answer questions about many subjects. About.com is now the eleventh most visited Web site; in October, it attracted twenty-nine million visitors in the United States. (By contrast, Yahoo! had a hundred and two million.) Last quarter, the *Times* reported that About.com's advertising revenues—about fifty million dollars this year—rose sixty-seven per cent over the same period a year before. "About was a hidden gem that people were not focussed on," Nisenholtz says. But analysts say that About.com is not expected to earn a profit until 2007.

Today, many media experts believe that the *Times'* greatest vulnerability is its concentration on newspapers. Unlike the Washington Post Company, which enjoys generous profits from investment in its Kaplan educational-services division, or E. W. Scripps, which has lucrative cable investments, the *Times* has been "very risk-averse," one former Times Company executive said. This executive believes that the company's insularity comes, inevitably, from the venerable family that oversees the institution and that controls sixty per cent of the voting stock: Punch Sulzberger and his three sisters are the third generation of this family; the fourth generation consists of Arthur, Jr., Michael Golden, and eleven siblings and cousins. Golden sees this as a strength: "Arthur and I, for obvious reasons, can be direct without concern that someone will not like what we say and there will be ramifications for our careers. Using that constructively is valuable for the company." To strengthen what they refer to as "the family glue," the various generations meet twice a year and, when there is a crisis, Arthur, Jr., arranges family conference calls.

An investment banker who knows Sulzberger sees another side: "The virtue of a family-owned company is that it takes the long view. The risk is that there is no discipline to force them to operate efficiently. Family ownership can spur risk-taking, as it did when Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. invested in satellite television in China or Fox News. Entrepreneurs take risks. The disadvantage comes when you have all that security and not the same drive. Arthur, to his credit, cares deeply about the journalism. But he lacks passion for the business side." Sulzberger challenges the notion that the *Times* is not diversified: "We are a company committed to journalism. That is our core strength. That is our hedgehog. We are not in the education or cooking business. You are going to see us make journalism investments. And I include About.com as journalism. About is about information."

The *Times'* other efforts at diversification have not been impressive. Its modest broadcast stations enjoy robust profit margins but provide only a very small slice of the company's revenue. As for the hundred-million-dollar investment in Discovery Times, one day when I was in Sulzberger's office he switched on the television set in his bookcase. "Ah, there it is," he said as a picture appeared. He watched for several seconds, said, "I have no idea what that show is," clicked the TV off, and explained, "In and of itself, an investment in a cable station, if that was our only reason for doing this, would not be overarchingly compelling. It may be a business to have, but it wouldn't be strategic." What is strategic, he said, is "building a television core" into *Times* journalism, particularly as we move into "a broadband world" where NYTimes.com will supply video as well as text. He did not mention that the national audience for the channel is negligible, and that it is situated in the cable bleachers. One senior Times Company executive describes the investment this way: "No one watches it, and no one will watch it. Very few on the business side liked the deal. It was all Arthur."

For much of Punch Sulzberger's tenure as chairman, his trusted business partner was the corporate president, Walter Mattson, and he had a devoted friend in Sydney Gruson, an ex-newsman with a fondness for collecting information and gossip, who was vice-chairman and deputy to the publisher. If newsroom morale was low, or a problem or an opportunity loomed, Gruson was there. Many people at the *Times*, together with some of Arthur, Jr.,'s friends outside the paper, believe that the newspaper's recent miscues are reminders of the absence of such a confidant.

To help him manage the company and plan for the future, Arthur, Jr., relies on Janet Robinson, a former schoolteacher who joined the company in 1983 as an advertising account executive and was named C.E.O. and president in December, 2004. Sulzberger and Robinson constantly pop into each other's office and exchange e-mails. "There's an extremely strong partnership between us," she says. "We make decisions together."

Late one afternoon last month, Sulzberger and Robinson, who is fifty-five, sat side by side in a small conference room on the fourteenth floor of the Times Building to discuss the company. It is a comfortable room with views of midtown Manhattan, and on the walls are framed front pages of the *Times*, including a four-cent edition dated April 15, 1865, and bearing the headline "PRESIDENT LINCOLN SHOT BY AN ASSASSIN," paintings by Sulzberger's wife, Gail Gregg, who left journalism and has become a successful artist, and a photograph of Punch. A bookcase contains volumes by generations of *Times* writers but also books about exploration and the outdoors, including Ernest Shackleton's "The Heart of the Antarctic" and Richard E. Byrd's "Alone."

"I shop to forget what I bought last year."

Sulzberger disagreed with the notion that he is insulated from frank advice. "I think I'm surrounded by incredibly smart people who get the newsroom," he said. "Janet, in fact, is a remarkable conduit for information from the newsroom for me. I take nothing away from my father and his wonderful tenure as publisher and chairman of this company. But I've got to find my own management style. It's a different work environment, requiring less command and control—much more bottom up."

"Can I just add one thing to that?" Robinson said. "One of the things Arthur gets great credit for internally is the fact that he's extremely inclusive in regard to asking opinions from a variety of sources. If he only had one source, if it was only me, or our general counsel, or Bill Keller, it wouldn't be Arthur. Arthur does his homework and seeks out other views."

At least one *Times* executive, however, says that Robinson discourages open discussion, explaining that Sulzberger "seeks opinions but because of Janet Robinson's style he doesn't get any." But Michael Golden believes that Robinson is a superb C.E.O.—"Her mental organization and her drive are dramatic"—and gives Sulzberger the business advice that he needs. The board member John Akers says that Arthur, Jr., like his father, is "smart enough to know what he is good at and what he is not good at." The son, Akers says, is "very good at creating a collegial environment among the top people at the *Times*. He knows that he didn't grow up in the business world, and Punch knew the same thing. They both got very good people to lead the business effort."

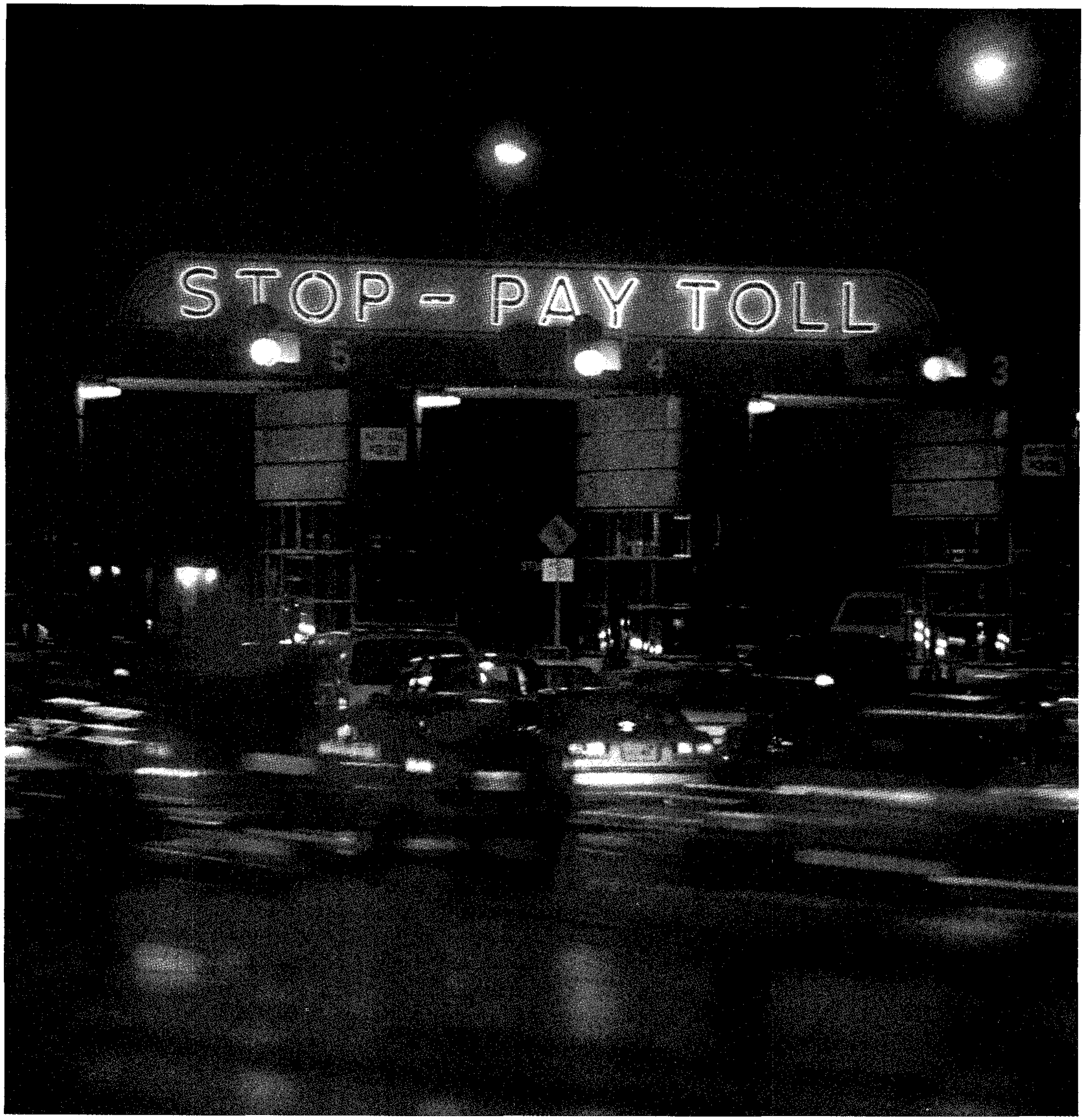
Like members of the Sulzberger family, Janet Robinson talks persuasively about the "public trust" of the newspaper. But financial pressures on newsroom managers have probably never been so fierce. The Times Company has cut budgets, including seven hundred jobs at its various properties this year. Forty-five jobs were lost in the *Times* newsroom alone, although Keller says that it is now "the same size as five years ago." But, while the *Times*, he says, has been treated more "gently" than others, including the Boston *Globe*, his editorial team is "looking hard" at how to do more for less—"in anticipation that the trend will continue." At the same time, he worries that "we're down to muscle." No doubt, there would have been even deeper cuts had it not been for the profitable national edition.

There also seems to be a growing sense that the *Times* must unite around its publisher. In recent weeks, Keller and senior editors have begun to speak out in Sulzberger's defense. Of the Miller case, Keller said, "Yes, Arthur was enthusiastically in favor of going to court. And so was I. In the much larger scheme of things, I'd much rather have a publisher whose first instinct is to stick up for a reporter rather than to drop into a defensive crouch and worry about his 'fiduciary' responsibilities. Yes, he has to worry about that stuff." But, Keller continued, "the fact that his first instinct was 'We have a reporter at risk'—that's something we should be proud of." And although much of the newsroom may be uneasy with Sulzberger's leadership, his most important constituencies are the board and the family, and conversations with family members suggest that there is a united front. "The family rallies around Arthur in times like this," his cousin Dan Cohen said. ♦

FICTION

TWENTY GRAND

BY REBECCA CURTIS


STOP - PAY TOLL
5
4
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On December 13, 1979, when my mother was thirty years old, she lost an old Armenian coin. That winter was cold, and she had been sleeping with my sister and me on a foldout couch in the living room to save on heat. We lived on a cleared ledge, a natural shelf, on a mountain high above a lake. The wind on the shelf was amazing. At night it leaped up to the blinking red light at the tip of the peak behind our house, then skidded back down across the pines and whistled past our windows, somehow inserting, through tiny cracks between the window and the frame, snow that piled, sloped and sparkling, on the sills.

Our driveway was a dirt road that wound through a field. It was often lined by eight-foot banks—which I climbed on my way home from school—with teetering, sand-specked bucket-lumps at their tops. Sporadically, a kid came with a tractor. When he left, the lane was clear. But overnight the wind swept snow across the shelf, up over the banks, and into the road. By morning the drifts were as deep as if the driveway hadn't been plowed at all. Every day, my mother called the kid, who was slow and did the easy jobs in town first, to try to get him to come. Then she shovelled a path to the woodpile and one to the car.

She barely ever looked at the coin. It was silver and heavy. On one side was a man with a craggy profile, a square crown, and one sleepy, thick-lidded eye, and on the other was a woman. The woman was voluptuous, wearing a gown, and holding something in her outstretched hand—maybe wheat. The coin wasn't a perfect circle, and its surface was pocked. But it had been my mother's mother's, and she kept it in her purse.

On that day she was in a foul mood. My sister was one and a half, and I was six. For weeks, the sky had been a chalky gray that darkened to charcoal in the afternoon. Snowflakes were wafting onto the car. We were going to visit my father. Before we left, my mother glanced in the kitchen mirror, tucked her hair behind her ears, and said, "We're out of groceries. If we don't get some cash from your father, I don't know what we'll eat tonight."

CHRISTOPH WILHELM/GETTY IMAGES

We often drove to visit him. He was a Guard bum for the Air National Guard, and lived sixty miles south, at the base in Portsmouth, where he was on alert. Occasionally, he flew to England to pilot refuellers for the looking-glass planes that swung along the Russian coast, but mostly he was on alert. This was temporary. He and my mother had married young, hastily, out of excitement, and spent five years moving around the country, to wherever my father was posted. But when my mother got pregnant they'd decided they needed a house. He'd switched from active duty to the Guard, and was stationed in New Hampshire. My mother liked Portsmouth. The sea kept the air mild. The streets in the downtown were cobblestoned, lined by brass lanterns. The university, where she could get a job or take classes, was close by. But the houses there were expensive, and my father's mother, who lived an hour north, offered my parents an acre of land for free. They drove up to the mountain. It was summer. The hay was high, gold, and flecked with Queen Anne's lace. He asked her what she thought. He said, "It's just for now," and she said, "All right." They moved their things into his mother's house. A week later, my father began to build a bungalow with a steep roof, gingerbread trim, and a little wooden deck, like the ones he'd seen tucked into hills nearby.

When he was on alert, my father lived with several hundred other men and wore a pea-green jumpsuit that, aside from the gold-zippered pockets on his calves and hips and the blue patch on his left shoulder, looked not unlike the pajamas that my sister and I wore to bed. The other men also wore the jumpsuits—except for the ones who wore navy polyester suits with stars—and they bunked alongside my father, in a vast facility that, much like a high-tech rabbit warren, existed largely under the earth. The complex was surrounded by two barbed-wire fences. To get inside, we had to stop at an electric gate and be "checked" by friendly black men wearing rifles. Then we walked—I always looked over my shoulder—down a long, dark, sloping concrete tunnel.

In the bunker, we were allowed to go to the library. The room was small, gingery, and hot, with shelves of leather-bound books. On the scratchy red chairs in the narrow aisles lay magazines, their articles about naked women or cars. Stuffing sprang out from the seats of the chairs, and cigarettes burned in tins on their arms.

The other place we could go was the Rec Center, which contained a Foosball table, a pool table (one ball missing, two cues with broken tips), a Parcheesi board, and a soda machine. The cafeteria down the hall smelled foreign and delicious—at its far end were vats of spaghetti and of soupy brown sauce, inside which, I guessed, was steak. Best of all, the food was free. But my mother and my sister and I were not allowed to eat it. We were not supposed to be in the warren, in fact, for more than an hour at a time. But my father sometimes sneaked us into the theatre, a room with a few benches and a slide screen, to watch a movie; and when I got hungry, as I always did, he'd carry me into the cafeteria, just far enough so that I could see the vats, then take me back out and ask me what I wanted, so that he could order it himself and slip it to me in the library. Usually I wanted lime Jell-O and garlic bread.

My father was on base five or six days at a stretch, four times a month. He was often on duty at Christmas, and was never sick. He was short and pale, but he had excellent posture. He admired Elvis's style and Henry Ford's business sense. When my mother burned toast, he wouldn't let her throw it out. He'd eat it himself, and wash it down with burnt coffee from the bottom of the pot. He was cheerful, deeply in love with my mother, and quick to get mad.

However much money he left us for while he was on alert, we were careful with it, spending it until it was gone. Then, on the third or fourth day of his absence, we'd drive to visit him and ask for more.

He'd tried to get a job in town. He'd taken a position at a cement plant, but it had gone bankrupt. Next, he'd signed on with a stationery company. But he didn't love his boss or selling pencils, and soon he rejoined the Air Force. The work, he said, was steady. We were all healthy, so we could do without benefits. He missed us. But it was neat when he got to fly the jets. The economy would swing up soon. And when it did we'd look at our options.

My mother zipped us into our snowsuits and dragged us to her Rabbit hatchback. We waited while she started it, swept the snow off, and scraped the ice from the windows. Then we wobbled down our long driveway, the engine ululating through drifts. Once we reached the bottom of the mountain, we drove on sharply twisting two-lane roads, under fifty-foot pines. In the distance were striped mountains, dots of skiers, lifts. After coming down from the Belknap Range, we wound along the last miles of Winnipesaukee. Passing the lake took time, and it was entertaining to imagine the elegant houses that sprawled upon its white edge as our own, or to count the trucks and the bright-colored ice shacks on its surface and predict how soon they'd fall in. After the lake was a long highway bordered by forest; and then the tolls, and beyond them our father.

Each trip was thrilling, because in winter we never left the house, except to go to Tillman's Discount World. We bought nothing, unless my mother saw something we needed. She'd study the item, then touch it and say, "It's all cotton, no polyester. We could use a new comforter. The old one's worn." She'd look at the price, and put it back. Later she'd say, "It's a good deal. It's seventy per cent off. It might not be here tomorrow." I'd nod. She'd say, "We don't need it. Your father would be upset." We'd walk the aisles. An hour would pass. She'd buy me a pair of jeans for school. And just as we were about to leave the store, the cart would swerve, go back to home furnishings, and she'd lift the heavy package and say firmly, "The old one has holes."

At home, we had great days. She was good at cooking, sewing, and folding laundry. She could wash my sister's diapers, then bleach the tub and wash my sister, in an hour flat. She did our taxes without a calculator. Sometimes she seemed quiet, and marked off days on the calendar. But she also said that our life would be perfect if my father's mother didn't live next door.

My grandmother lived in the only other house on the shelf, a tall white Colonial, and she called often, to tell my mother that wind or raccoons had knocked our trash cans over, or to ask when my father would be home. She'd given us land, and she loved my father intensely, so she also gave advice. If his car was gone for a week, she'd tell my mother that he should work less hard or he'd get sick. If his car was in our driveway for more than two days, she'd call to say that he'd better go back to base, lest his superiors realize that he wasn't necessary and fire him. In his absence, she sometimes appeared at our door with a gift: raspberry jam she'd canned herself. And, while she drank the coffee my mother had brewed, her eyes would light on whatever was new in our house—a set of dishtowels, a plastic tablecloth—and she would praise the object's beauty and ask how much it had cost.

That morning, she'd installed a snow fence in our field. My mother thought snow fences were ugly. Also, she had a theory that they caused more drift than they prevented. But three men and two trucks had been in our road at 6 A.M. By the time my mother heard the drills and ran outside to ask the men what they were doing, her black hair flying in the wind, the fence was already installed. When my mother called my grandmother to say, politely, that she didn't want a snow fence, my grandmother said, "I know you don't, Annah. It's for him." And hung up.

My mother looked at the phone. Put it back on the hook. Looked in the fridge and saw that, except for some leftover meatloaf, we were completely out of food. She turned to me and said, "She should have asked." I nodded. "Your grandmother," she said, "does not respect our privacy." I nodded again.

But secretly I admired my grandmother, because she read me the books I liked five times in a row upon demand and kept crystal bowls of foil-wrapped chocolates all around her den. She also hugged me a lot, and at times she sat me down for serious talks:

"Your mother spends all your father's money."

"I know."

"I myself waited twenty years to buy a dishwasher."

"I know."

"People should only spend what they have."

"I agree."

"I didn't even think about a washer or a dryer."

"We don't have a dryer."

"Your mother has ruined your father's life."

"I know."

"Want to play Racko?"

"O.K."

And later:

"Take this coffee cake to your mother."

"She won't want it."

"Do you want it?"

"Yes."

"Then say it's for you."

"O.K."

We drove the long stretch before the tolls. At the first tollbooth, my mother used the last token in the roll between the seats. She hummed; my sister fell asleep. The snow was falling straight down so that the air seemed both white and light purple. When the second tollbooth appeared in the distance, my mother's hand moved through her purse. But she kept looking ahead. Then she passed the purse to me, in the back seat. "Look in here," she said. "See if you can find some quarters."

I looked. I found safety pins, a tissue, and a dinner mint. "No quarters," I said.

She slowed, and peered at the tollbooth. "Do me a favor," she said. "Check and see if you find any under the seats."

I climbed past my sister. Her head was on her shoulder, and she had blobs of thrush at the edges of her mouth. I pushed my belly to the car hump and reached into the dark space above each mat. Eventually, I touched a cracker with a soft, mauled edge.

"It's O.K.," my mother said. "It's all right. Come up."

We'd pulled into the toll. My mother looked through the purse herself. Then she told the woman in the booth that she was out of money. That she was sorry, but she could pay the woman on her way back.

"I'm sorry, too," the woman said. "But you can't do that."

The woman was older—sixty, perhaps—her hair gray and short. Above the trim of her parka, her large face was grim, or maybe just red from the cold.

My mother took a picture from her wallet and handed it up. "I'm going to see my husband," she said. "This is him. He's at the base down the road. I can get cash from him as soon as I get there, and I'll come right back." She hesitated. "You can keep the I.D. if you need something to hold," she said.

The woman pointed toward the empty lot to the right of the tolls.

My mother pleaded with the woman, to the extent that she was capable of it, saying that the roads were bad, we were an hour from home, she couldn't turn around now, she had two kids in tow—but her pleading, more insistent than humble, just made the woman mad. The woman said that if my mother did not pull over she would sound an alarm.

My mother looked down at her lap. Her lips pressed together; she seemed nonplussed. She reached into her purse, unzipped a small pocket, and removed the old coin.

"Here," she said. "It's the same as a dollar."

The woman stuck out her arm, took it, and grunted.

For the rest of the ride, my mother did not speak, and when we arrived at the bunker we did not go in. Instead, we stood outside the fence. I was cold, and I could see Derek, the chief guard inside the gate, waiting to check me. I mentioned this.

"You don't need to be checked," my mother said.

"Yes, I do," I said. "I need to be checked."

Derek smiled at me. His smile said, We have serious business to do. I know we might not be able to do it now. But later I will check you.

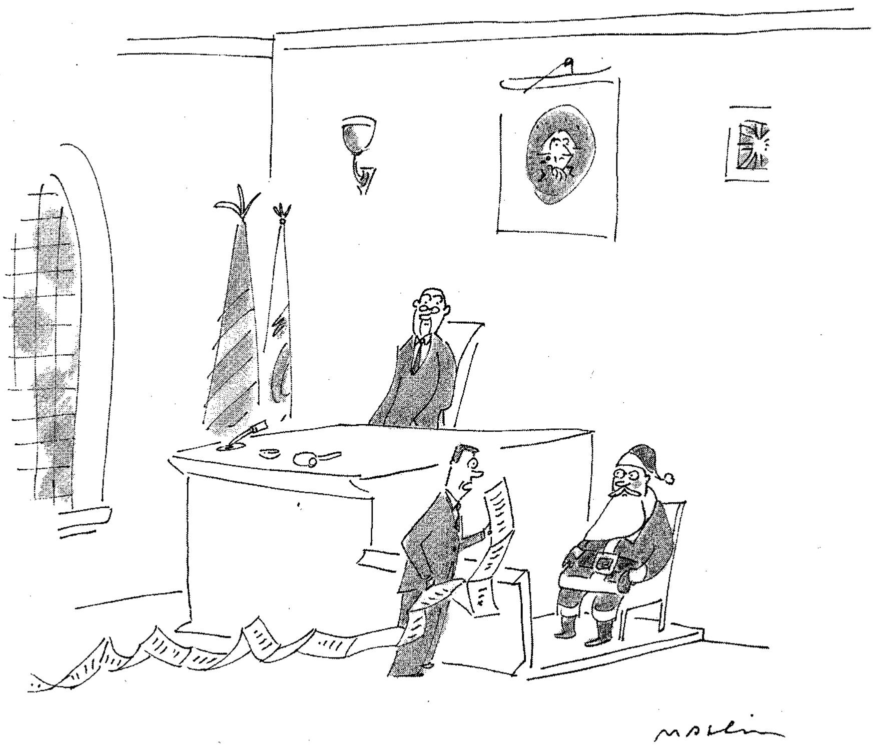
At last my father came out. He was grinning. The electric gate lifted. He ducked under and swung out his arms.

My mother walked into them.

Derek looked away, in order to preserve our dignity—mine and his.

"What's wrong?" my father said.

She shook her head.



"I now show you this list of who's been naughty and who's been nice, and I ask you if you've ever seen it before."

We got back into the car and drove past a frozen marsh and some acres of trailers to the guesthouse: a yellow one-story building with a flat tar roof. Its entry consisted of a dining room—a room with a table long enough for several families to eat at—and a kitchenette with a fridge that was always empty except for the perpetually abandoned Chinese food in grease-soaked brown bags. Above the stove were cupboards containing sugar packets, mouse turds, and instant coffee. Down a hall were three bedrooms, each equipped with bed, nightstand, ashtray, clock radio. Typically, two or three families made use of the guesthouse at any one time, and the sounds of radio static floated through the hall. In the living room, two brown couches sat on an orange rug. Behind them was a bin of toys I knew well: plastic rabbits with foolish, ink-smeared faces and stuffed bears with crusty patches on their bodies.

I was dumped in the living room. My mother pulled my father into a bedroom. I turned on the TV, and set my sister in front of it. Then I slipped down the hall and sat by the bedroom door.

At first I heard the usual sounds: low voices, metal legs scraping the floor, the radio. Then there was fiscal talk. My mother asked for money. He gave her a ten. She asked for a twenty. He told her ten was all he had, save for a five he'd set aside for himself. She said we needed groceries.

"You got groceries last week," he said.

"We need groceries for this week," she said.

"Here," he said. He gave her the five.

"I don't want it," she said. "What will you use?"

"The food here is free." He paused. "If I want a beer," he added, "I'll borrow a few bucks from the guys."

"You have tokens?"

"Yeah. I have a roll in my car."

A sound escaped her, a sigh.

My knees had fallen asleep. Intriguing Chinese-food smells were coming from the kitchen: another couple had finished their nap and heated some up. I wanted food, and thought they might give me some if I asked, but I was too interested to leave the door.

"I can't do it," my mother said. "I can't do it anymore."

"Come on, Annah."

"I'm by myself with the girls for a

week. Your mother calls every day. I go crazy."

"Why don't you just tell her when I'll be home?"

"It's not her business."

"I don't know what you want me to do."

"You need to get another job."

"We tried that already."

"I need to see you at night. I want you to come home at night like other men."

"I'll apply for shorter shifts."

"That's not enough."

They went back and forth for a while. Truly, I think, he liked his job. He'd never been in a war. Or only twice, and only to fly refuellers for the bombers; which meant he'd hovered beyond missile range, and hardly seemed to count. Finally, she said, "I spent my coin."

"Your coin?"

"My mother's coin."

"You spent that coin?"

"Yes."

He said, "I wish you hadn't spent that coin."

"Well, I did."

Nothing. Then, "Why did you do that?"

"I needed money for the toll."

"You said you'd never spend it."

"I told you, I was out of money. I needed money for the toll."

Silence.

"It was my coin," she said.

I knew the coin. I knew that my mother's mother had given it to her just before she died, and that she'd died when my mother was a child. During her life, she'd worked as the superintendent of two apartment buildings in Watertown, Massachusetts, and had owned a corner store. She was heavy-set, kept her hair in a bun, and always wore a gray wool dress and a single strand of pearls, even when collecting money from tenants or loading coal into a furnace. She had not been home much. But she'd had a lot of friends, and had loved her life. In the hospital, she gave my mother the coin and said that if my mother kept it she would always have a dollar in her purse.

"That coin was very valuable," my father said.

"I know," my mother said. "It was money."

"No, Annah, that coin was worth a lot."

"What do you mean?"

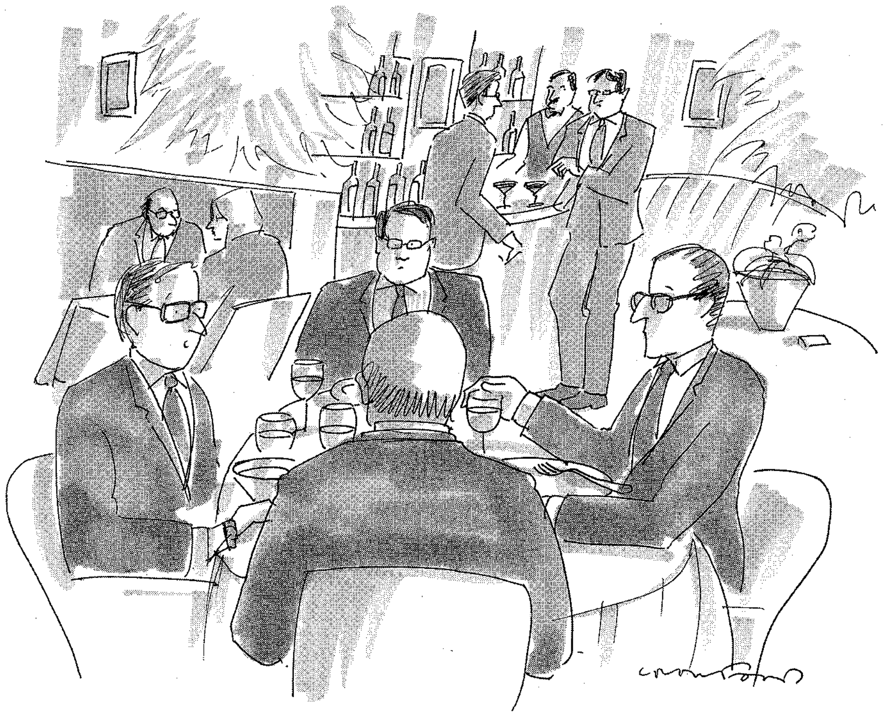
"I mean it was worth a lot."

"How come you didn't tell me?"

"You would have spent it."

Silence. He was right. She would have spent it. Then, "How do you know?"

A long pause. "I got it evaluated."



"I admit it—I started paying for sex this summer, and it's suprisingly affordable."

"How much?"

"Twenty grand," he said.

A cave opened its mouth in my heart. I knew what twenty grand was. I also knew what a googol, the largest number in the world, was—a hundred zeroes—but twenty grand seemed better. I saw a lifetime of unshared Happy Meals and always getting a soda with dinner at Ye Olde Tavern restaurant. I knew that with twenty grand we couldn't have bought the ocean but it seemed to me that we could have bought Wallace Sands, the beach we went to, and perhaps its section of ocean, and the Isles of Shoals, which my mother was always pointing out and which appeared from the shore as a long humpy gray shadow on the horizon, like a whale.

"You tricked me," she said. I'd heard her sound indignant before, but I'd never heard her sound indignant and justified. "You tricked me," she said again.

"I didn't trick you," my father said. "I just didn't tell you."

She said nothing.

He cleared his throat. "We'll get it back."

"What?"

"We'll get it back."

"How?"

His plan unfolded. It was simple and obvious: The lady would still be at the tollbooth. They'd give her a dollar, or a ten if need be, and get the coin back. A discussion followed. They'd get it back. Then they'd sell it. They would? They really would. Were they partners? They were. Was my father willing to quit the military, sell the house, and move us someplace warmer, and more exciting, like Portsmouth? No, he wasn't sure about selling the house. But he thought maybe we could rent it out—some skiers might want it—and use the money to rent a small place in Portsmouth. As for the Guard, he said, he wouldn't mind getting out. The Guard had been good to him, but he didn't want to be a Guard bum forever. He knew a guy who'd opened a franchise—a Kentucky Fried Chicken—and done well. "You just need"—his voice deepened—"seed money and a loan." The bed creaked. If she still wanted to go to school, he said, he was willing to help her look into it.

She said, "I want to decorate it myself. The house."

He said, "I'd like a garage."

"We have to be careful. We don't want to spend it all at once."

He cleared his throat.

"I'd like a new couch," she said.

"You can have that," he said. "I'd like a garage."

"First the move," she said. "Then see what's left."

My father checked out on a one-hour emergency pass. We all got into my mother's car. We drove to the exit of the base, stopping at the gatehouse so that my father could show the pass to the guard. The guard was young, with thick blond eyebrows and fat hands. He saw us, read the pass, and stopped smiling. He said, "Don't be late, Bill." The gate rose. We headed back the way we'd come.

On the way, I saw a McDonald's. It was in a valley that we could see from the highway, a big gold "M" in the distance. I requested a stop. I mentioned my desire for a Happy Meal.

"We don't have any money," my mother said.

"Yes, you do," I said. "You have ten dollars."

"The ten dollars is not for Happy Meals," she said. "It's for groceries."

I made what I felt was a tragic sound.

"Just wait," she said. "There's crackers in the glove compartment."

"No crackers," I wailed.

She reached back and slapped me.

The slap was weak and barely touched my skin. But I was humiliated, because she was my great love. I vowed that I would never care for her again.

We pulled over just before the tollbooths. We parked in the shameful turnaround lot. My mother and father got out and spoke together near the car. Then they opened my door and studied my sister and me.

"What about them?" my mother said.

My father shrugged. "We'll just be a minute."

She glanced at the tollbooths. Hers was fifth, in a row of ten. Snow-laden trucks were sliding up to the booths at thirty miles an hour, floating on ice and sometimes missing the stop. She held out her palm, and in an instant the flakes falling on it became water.

She said, "We could carry them."

He checked his watch. "Leave them here."

She looked at me, said, "Stay in the car," and shut the door.

I watched them walk to the edge of the highway and grab hands. They stood and waited for several minutes while trucks passed. Then they ran across the first lane, paused on the first toll island, and dashed across again.

Later that night, I asked my mother what had happened, and she said it wasn't my business. But after I asked her a fourth time, she told me.

The woman was still there.

"Sure, I remember you," she said. "You gave me this." She held it up.

Just then a blue sedan slid into the stall. My parents hurried up onto the platform behind the booth, a raised nub, and squished themselves against the booth's metal side. "I have a dollar now," my mother said, when the sedan was gone. "This is my husband." My father said, "Hello, I'm Bill," in his most charming, glad-to-meet-you voice. The woman nodded.

"I came to get my coin back," my mother said. She held out a token.

The woman shook her head. "This coin belongs to me," she said.

"It's my coin," my mother said.

"You gave it to me," the woman said, "and now it's mine. I took it out of the box"—she pointed to a cardboard box on a metal counter—"and I replaced it with my own dollar."

A car veered into the stall. My parents climbed back onto the nub. More cars followed. When they stepped down, my mother had to shout to be heard above the traffic. "I didn't give it to you," she said. "I left it with you for safekeeping."

The woman told my parents to leave. She said she wasn't a fool. She knew the coin was worth money. She could tell, because it looked old. My mother nodded. Then she begged. The coin was the only thing she had of her mother's, she said. Her mother had died when she was nine. It was why she'd kept it all these years. Yes, it was worth something. But it was sentimental to her. It was her memory, really, of her mother.

My father rubbed his nose. "It's not worth much," he said.

The woman gestured my parents back onto the nub. Then she opened a panel in the booth, and spoke to them through it while she serviced cars. Her own mother was not alive, of course, she said. Her own mother had died years ago. She herself was sixty-two and worked in a tollbooth. She had arthritis and shingles, not to mention other things. She shrugged, and said she was getting it appraised by a dealer and selling it.

They had been at the booth for half an hour. The sky was dark.

If they didn't leave now, the woman said, she'd call the police.

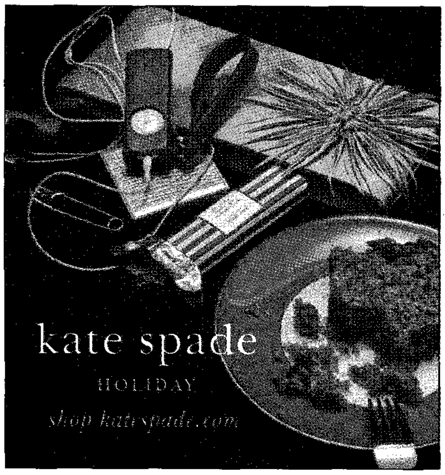
My mother leaned forward. "It's worth twenty grand," she said.

The woman blinked, and waved my mother away.

When they got back to the lot, they found that we were gone. My father was enraged—he was overdue on his emergency pass—but he proposed a plan.

My mother agreed to his plan. She started walking north along the shoulder, looking for us. But then she turned into the woods. She felt sure that wandering into them was something I might have done. It was, but it was equally something she herself might have done. There were an infinite number of places to enter the forest, which stretched darkly, politely, on both sides of the road. It was overwhelming, but also irresistible. My mother was compelled, perhaps, by the hopelessness of the task. Of course, footprints would have been the thing to look for; but the snow was falling thickly and had already left two inches on top of the Rabbit, and she decided that it had covered our tracks. She walked into the forest until she could no longer hear the cars on the highway, and sat down. A tree, a handsome green pine, immediately dropped a load of snow on her head. She brushed it off. Her jeans grew wet. The forest said *shuh, shuh*, and the pines leaned to and fro in the wind. Thirty more minutes passed; my father strode back and forth by the tollbooths, looking for my mother. He was unable to find her tracks in the dark. He shouted her name and swore a lot. When he finally saw her footprints, he followed them a quarter mile into the woods and found her sitting, covered in snow, under the spruce.

"Get up," he said.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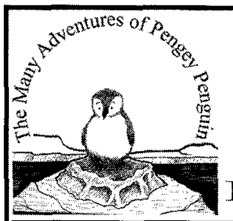
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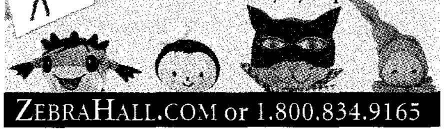
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"I can't."

"Get up."

"It's too late," she said. "They're gone. We've lost them, and it's my fault. I never should have left them in the car."

He was a fool, but he was not a fool. He saw that she was pining for the coin.

He slapped her.

"We're looking for the girls," he said.

They trudged back to the car. They opened the choke, pumped the gas, and turned the car on. Then they got out the brush and the scraper and brushed off the snow and scraped off the ice, and got in.

After my parents had left, I'd unbuckled my sister and pulled her from the car. I'd walked us south along the shoulder toward McDonald's. We'd gone about thirty feet when a white sedan pulled over. The door opened, and a woman in a burgundy coat stepped out. She asked me where our parents were. My sister began to cry. I said they'd gone on an errand, and saw, in the woman's face, that she thought we'd been abandoned. She asked me where my parents' vehicle was; I walked her to it. When she saw the Rabbit—with its mismatched fenders (one orange, one blue) and rusty frame—I saw that she thought they'd left the car behind, too. She squatted down, there in the lot, and brought her large white face close to mine. She asked if I was hungry. I nodded. Her brow wrinkled. She asked if my sister and I had eaten that day at all. We'd had meatloaf sandwiches right before leaving home. But for some reason when I looked at her long burgundy coat my mouth twitched and I said, "Just crackers."

At McDonald's I ate two boxes of Chicken McNuggets, six containers of sweet-and-sour sauce, and drank two orange drinks. My sister was too senseless with sorrow to eat her own, and the woman's husband, Mr. Swendseid, had to walk around the restaurant, bouncing her up and down in his arms. Mrs. Swendseid watched me eat. Then she told me to put on my coat.

By the time my parents reached the police station, Mrs. Swendseid had played three sets of Connect Four with me and was going for a fourth. She'd let me win twice, and had won once herself. She'd also described her house on the sea, where, she'd suggested, we might stay temporarily.

I don't know what my parents said when they arrived. Eventually, a sergeant must have shoved a thumb toward the lounge in back.

My father made some stiff gestures of gratitude at first: "Glad you found them, thanks for bringing them here—"

Which were answered by the Swendseids: "The least we could do . . . on a day like this . . . twenty degrees. That's without the windchill, dear, with the windchill it's twenty below—"

And interrupted by my father: "For Christ's sake!"

Then various accusations came out: "Stole our children . . . we were ten feet away . . . left them alone for five minutes—"

"More like twenty, I'd say. We waited by your Rabbit—"

"You were nowhere in sight. What kind of parent"—this was Mr. Swendseid, in whose arms I was being squeezed—"these babies . . . nothing but crackers for a week—"

At which point the accumulated joy of the two boxes of chicken nuggets, six packets of sweet-and-sour sauce, and two orange drinks overcame me, and I threw up in his lap.

"Christ," he said, and shoved me away.

Mrs. Swendseid extended her arms somewhat gingerly. Produced a tissue and wiped my mouth. "The poor dear," she said. "No wonder! No protein in weeks—she can't digest it anymore!"

My father looked very small next to Mr. Swendseid, and, perhaps because of this, was standing far away from him, near the door.

My mother knelt down. Her hair hung in wild curls. Her eyes were dark brown with spots of gold, like stars drowning in a muddy pond.

She said, "Tell the lady you lied."

I took a look at Mrs. Swendseid. Her face expressed disappointment. Her white hair was coiled high on her head; in the press of her maple lips, which she'd colored in my presence, there was a tremor. I saw a snobbish pity in her eyes. I thought of the green train with working lights and three speeds that I'd admired two Christmases running in the Sears catalogue, and I had thought I'd get this one from Mrs. Swendseid.

"You're stupid," I told her.

My mother made me apologize. I did. Mrs. Swendseid said that she should have known better than to pick up a strange child from the highway.

On the way back to the base, my parents laughed about the whole fiasco. They did not mention the coin. My father particularly enjoyed the fact that I'd got sick on Mr. Swendseid, and said more than once, "He was pretty surprised," as if my dinner's ejection had been a swift and patriotic strike in his defense.

But when we reached the base my mother grew quiet. My father got out of the car and walked around to the driver's side.

"O.K.," he said.

She looked into the dark. Snow was falling thickly on the windshield, through which the lights along the barbed-wire fence twinkled, exotic and smeared.

"You can't stay here," he said.

She mentioned that she'd hoped he would come home. She said that he could say it was an emergency.

"It's not an emergency," he said.

She put the car in gear. The shift stuck, and she did it a second time.

"Drive slow," he said.

We did. The snow came down in gusts, like ghosts slapping themselves against the car, and I knew we would die. When we reached the bottom of our mountain, it was past midnight. Before the steep hill to our house was a flat stretch of fifty feet. My mother stopped the Rabbit, gunned the engine, and hoped the momentum would take us up. On the fifth try, it did. When she got to our driveway, she pulled hard to the right, the car swung into the drive, and its wheels spun, then spun again.

She got out and got my sister out. "Put your hat and mittens on," she said. The snow had stopped. Around us was the world I knew well: my grandmother's house at the midpoint of the mountain, the road climbing up into the woods, and the little mountain behind, all covered in white. Our driveway was a perfect slide of ice. I took a step and fell. Got up and fell again. I decided to crawl. My mother laughed at me. But after falling a few times she hooked my sister under an arm and crawled, too. When we rounded the bend, I saw our house far ahead—she'd left a lamp on—and the black vigil of trees at the field's edge. At the top of the sky was the moon.

"The moon!" I said. "Ooh!"

It was full. Or almost full, like a lumpy opal or a nice fake pearl.

I howled. The idea had appeal. The forest seemed dark and deadly, the house worse, as if it might be concealing something upstairs, which would wait until the lights went out to strike. But as a wolf I was safe. I howled, and my mother howled obligingly, and my sister made a silly *woo-woo* noise. We heard a weak bark from the trees.

"Hurry up," my mother said.

The yip came again. It was the coyote, the one that skulked by the woods' edge in late afternoon. But I felt a thrill in my loins, as if I had to pee. I howled.

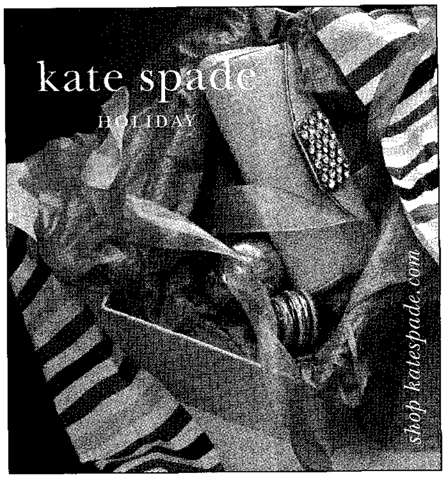
"Shut up," my mother said.

We reached the house. She turned on more lights. I saw a maudlin tear in her eye.

"You shut up," I said. I began to imagine that it wasn't too late to find Mrs. Swendseid and tell her I'd changed my mind.

But why did my mother cry? Undoubtedly for the lost twenty grand. But also, perhaps, for other things, such as all the things twenty grand could have bought—the house in Portsmouth, the garage, the new job for my father. Or perhaps for her dead mother, the coin, her someday career.

When my father came home a few days later, he was unusually solicitous for several days. Then one afternoon, in the middle of ironing a shirt, my mother paused and said, "I miss my mother's coin," and my father turned from the other room and said, "Then you shouldn't have spent it." ♦



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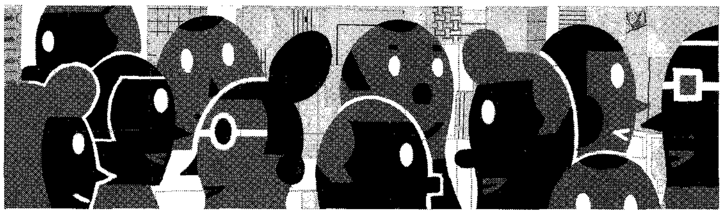


BOOKS

THE DEEP END

A new life of D. H. Lawrence.

BY BENJAMIN KUNKEL

If, as Oscar Wilde said, when critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself, then D. H. Lawrence must count as one of the most harmonious writers of all time. People talking about Lawrence sound like his own quarrelsome couples: they hate him, they say, or they love him, or both. And the tides of his reception have likewise shifted between adulation and disdain. In the decades after the Second World War, Lawrence was regarded as a culture hero: an intellectual up from the working class, a prophet against mechanized existence, a champion of instinctual life. And, having found a way in "The Rainbow" and "Women in Love" to dramatize the lives of his characters at a level where aggression and desire face off in a kind of primitive incandescence, he was duly credited as a technical innovator. More notoriously, he had also, in "Lady Chatterley's Lover," opened up the English-language novel to a frank, four-letter-word treatment of sex. A critic as temperamentally unsympathetic to Lawrence as Irving Howe could write, with a revealing sense of priority, of "the revolutionary achievements of Lawrence, Joyce and, to a smaller extent, Woolf." The list doesn't usually come out that way today.

Lawrence never quite belonged among the modernists anyway. Impatient with their aestheticism, he declared that his concern was with "man alive." And there is none of Eliot's "extinction of personality" about his work; Lawrence's very personal voice, jocularly abusive like a male friend's, or high-spirited and judgmental like a teenage girl's, bounding always between the disjunct registers of the chatty and the rhapsodic, can be heard in his short stories and essays as plainly as in his letters. But his demotion from the modernist canon has been prompted by moral disapproval as well. Martin Amis has provided a succinct bill of indictment:

> When I reflect that D. H. Lawrence, perhaps the most foul-tempered writer of all time (beater of women and animals, racist, anti-Semite, etc., etc.), was also, perhaps, the most extravagantly slapdash exponent of language, I feel the lure of some immense generalisation about probity and prose.

Amis goes on to claim that an author's life is never more than "just an interesting extra." But this is what neither Lawrence's acolytes nor his detractors have ever been able to accept. Invariably, the vitalist is scrutinized in the light of his own vita.

John Worthen, who wrote the first volume of a vast, three-volume Lawrence biography that Cambridge University Press published in the nineteen-nineties, presents his new book, "D. H. Lawrence: The Life of an Outsider" (Counterpoint; $29.95), as a project of rehabilitation, "the first one-volume life of Lawrence to be written since his reputation came under such assault," and he deals briskly with most of the charges that Amis and others have lodged. Lawrence did sometimes hit his wife, Frieda—though she, much the bigger person, sometimes struck first, with plate in hand. (She claimed that she "preferred it that way. Battles must be. If he had sulked or borne me a grudge, how tedious!") As for beaten "animals," these consist of a little black dog named Bibbles, whom Lawrence set to kicking one day because the creature seemed to him too promiscuous, too "Walt-Whitmanesque" in its affections. This is pitiably absurd, and unforgivable, but also unique in Lawrence's life. His depictions of animals and, indeed, of women are among the most intimately sympathetic in English.

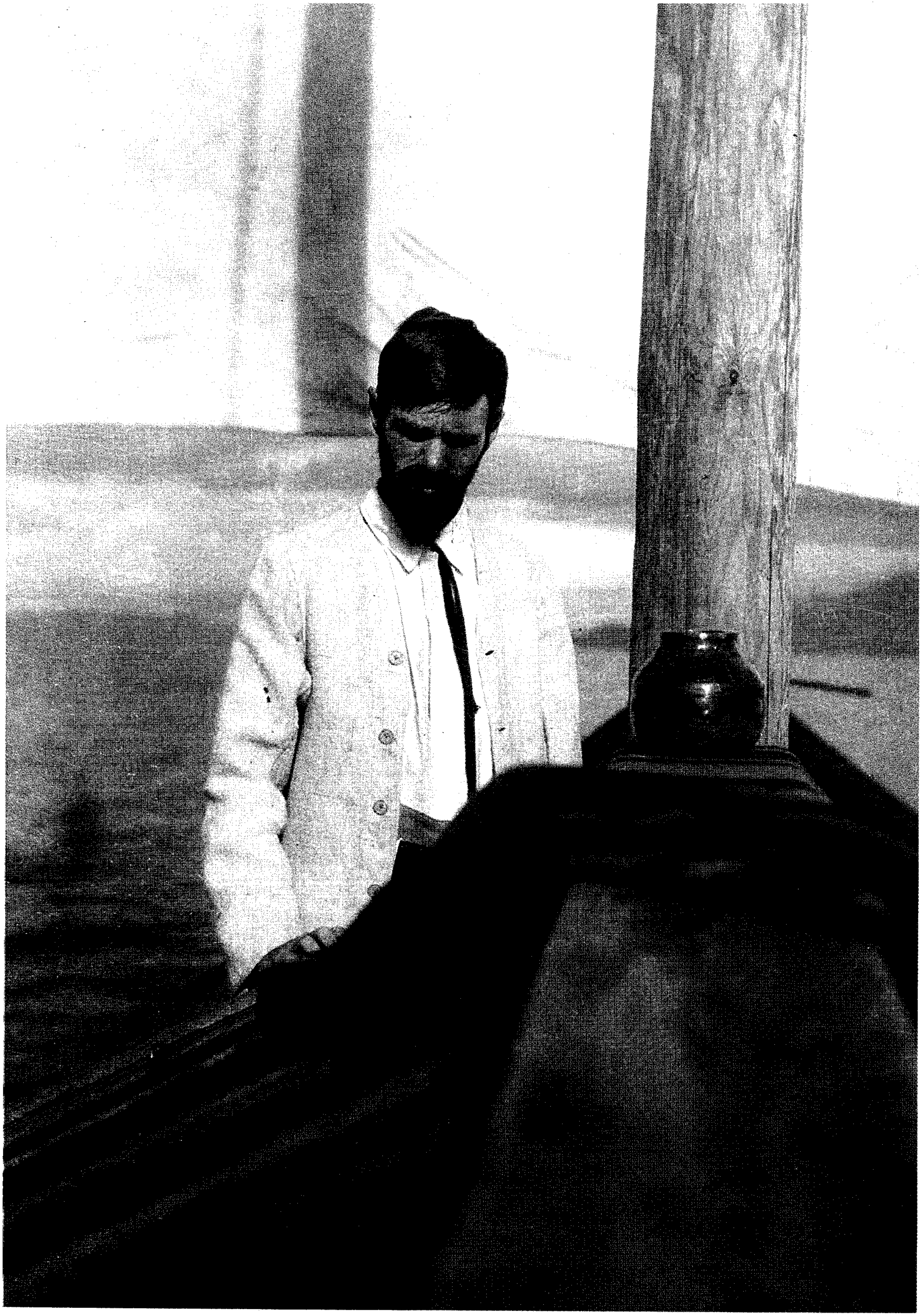
Worthen denies that Lawrence was notably anti-Semitic, and certainly his few unpleasant references to Jews are as nothing compared with the systematic noxiousness of Pound and Eliot. But he clearly thought in racial terms, and took any people, much as he did any person, as an occasion for wild generalization. When a London publisher turned down "Sons and Lovers" on the ground that its "want of reticence" would render it unacceptable to the public, Lawrence responded with a wholesale denunciation of the English people:

> Curse the blasted, jelly-boned swines, the slimy, the belly-wriggling invertebrates, the miserable sodding rotters, the flaming sods, the snivelling, dribbling, dithering palsied pulse-less lot that make up England today. . . . God, how I hate them! God curse them, funkers. God blast them, wishwash. Exterminate them, slime.

In a postscript to the same thunderous letter to his friend and editor Edward Garnett, Lawrence mildly acknowledges that the publisher is "quite right, as a business man."

Probably the least interesting question we can ask about Lawrence is whether on occasion he violated certain worthy contemporary taboos; he did. More interesting is that for a generation or two it was common for the sense of accusation to run the other way: to feel that Lawrence, by example of his passion and courage, stood in judgment over us. "He shames one, Lawrence," Henry Miller wrote, while Diana Trilling argued that those who disdained Lawrence were exhibiting what psychoanalysts call a reaction formation: "Lawrence hits so directly at our weaknesses that we rush to the attack upon *his* weaknesses." Certainly few

Lawrence on Lake Chapala, in Mexico, 1923. In the New World, he sought some intimation of a healthier civilization.



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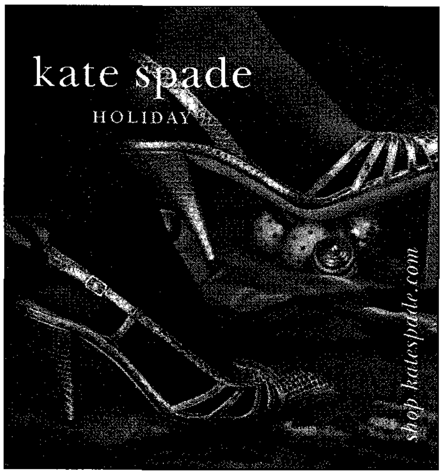

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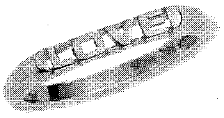

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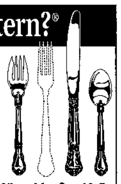

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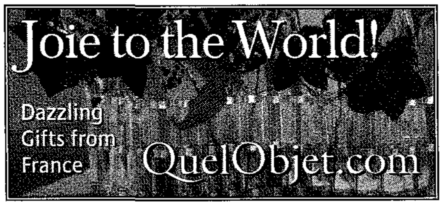

readers will come away from this latest life of Lawrence feeling that they have been more industrious, honest, and energetic than its subject.

He was also often very angry, unhappy, and ill. The fourth of five children, David Herbert Lawrence was born in 1885 in the coal-mining village of Eastwood, in Essex. A neighbor described a "snuffly-nosed little beggar, seldom without a cold," whose mother seemed anxious whether he would survive. The same neighbor recalled that the boy didn't resemble his father, a large, burly man who went to work at the age of ten and stayed in the mines until his mid-sixties. His courtship of Lydia Beardsall, from a genteel family that had come sharply down in the world, resembled a D. H. Lawrence short story: intense physical desire worked its compulsions across classes, and marriage was the quick result. By the time her third son was born, Lydia regarded the union as a disastrous misalliance. Romanticizing her family's past and plotting her children's escape from the choking environment of Eastwood, she devoured stacks of books while her husband visited the pub.

In 1901, at sixteen, Lawrence had been attempting to do his part for the family by working in a factory when his elder brother Ernest died of pneumonia. A few months later, Lawrence came down with the illness himself, and had to be nursed back to health by his mother, who escaped her crushing grief over one son by caring for another. "We have loved each other," Lawrence would write, "almost with a husband and wife love, as well as filial and maternal. We knew each other by instinct."

By the summer of the next year, Lawrence was well enough to begin paying regular visits to the nearby farm of some family friends, and for the rest of his life, in fiction, essays, and letters, he celebrated the flowers, bushes, and trees he saw along the way. Lawrence's famous nature descriptions are always grateful and attentive, and to read any biography of him is to understand how often this characteristic mood is the feeling of a convalescent restored to health. Of course, descriptions of hawthorn buds "tight and hard as pearls" and "tender-budded trees" that "shuddered and moaned" (from Lawrence's first novel, "The White Peacock") also fairly pulse with suppressed sexual feeling. And there at the farm lived a pretty, intense, and earnest girl his age named Jessie Chambers, Lawrence's first love.

Lydia encouraged her son, who was not strong enough for manual work, to take a degree at Nottingham University College and become a schoolteacher. But it was Jessie who insisted that the collier's son might become a published writer, and who, when he was twenty-three, first submitted his poems to the scrutiny of editors. Nor did Jessie remain for long the only believer in his gifts. Ford Madox Heuffer (later Ford), the powerful editor of the *English Review*, read the poems she sent him and soon urged a publisher to take on "The White Peacock," Lawrence's enormously wordy, sluggishly ecstatic tale of doomed love. "It's got every fault that the English novel can have," Lawrence recalled Heuffer shouting in a London bus. "But, you've got GENIUS."

The trouble with Lawrence and Jessie was that they had found no role for sex in their relationship; they ignored the looming fact of it for years, and, when they finally gave in, both had a terrible time. It wasn't until Lawrence met Frieda that he received intellectual encouragement and carnal fulfillment from the same source. Less than two weeks after Lawrence broke with Jessie, his mother began to die of cancer. Lawrence moved back to Eastwood to care for her, and once her pain became unbearable he and his sister Ada took it on themselves to administer an overdose of morphine. "There was one place in the world that stood solid and did not melt away into unreality: the place where his mother was." The line comes from the closely autobiographical "Sons and Lovers," and when you think of the desperate peregrinations of Lawrence's adult life you wonder whether he ever found such a place again.

By the time "The White Peacock" appeared, in early 1911, Lawrence had a sore heart but a well-launched career as a novelist, a respectable income as a primary-school teacher, and a beautiful, if conventional, fiancée in a fellow-instructor, Louise Burrows. When he became deathly ill that fall with double pneumonia, you might suppose that these comforts would have grown only the more attractive, yet Lawrence's periodic brushes with extinction seem always to have made

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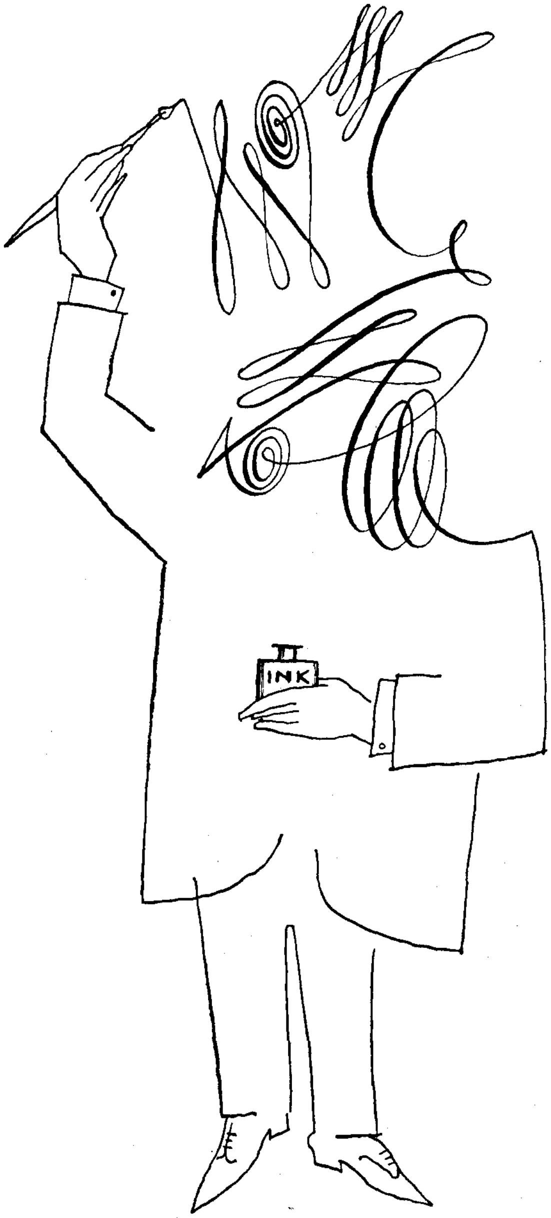

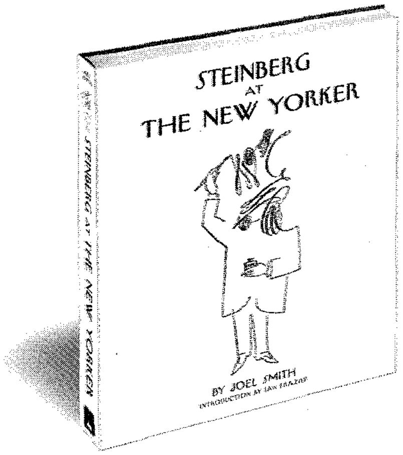
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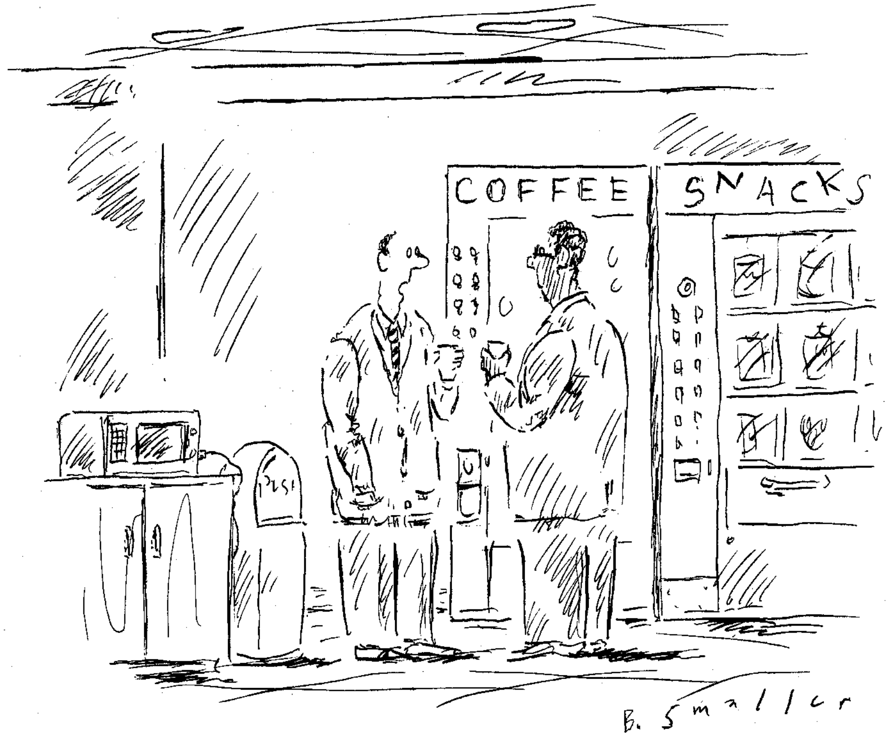


"My career doesn't reflect what my passions are as much as where my health insurance is."

• •

him want more out of life. Once recovered, he ended his brief engagement: "I ask you to dismiss me. I am afraid we are not well suited. My illness has changed me a good deal, has broken a good many of the old bonds that held me."

Lawrence wanted to go abroad, and a former professor of his, Ernest Weekley, had contacts in Germany. When Lawrence arrived to meet Weekley for lunch, he instead found his German wife, Frieda, thirty-three years old, the mother of three children, and the former lover of the unorthodox psychoanalyst Otto Gross, from whom she had picked up the congenial idea of the Oedipus complex; her influence is patent in the title of "Sons and Lovers." Frieda was intelligent, spirited, direct, handsome—and aristocratic. With the maid out, she was at a loss for how to turn on the gas stove for tea, and Lawrence reprimanded her for her incompetence. All his life, Lawrence seems to have endeared himself to people by telling them just what was wrong with them. This was not all he told her, of course. Within days, he had written to say that she was "the most wonderful woman in all England."

Frieda, it seems, had nothing more in mind than another affair. But to Lawrence she was "the woman of a lifetime," and by writing to Weekley—"I love your wife and she loves me"—he wrenched his apprehension of fate into the reality of it, forcing Frieda to choose between marrying an "ill bred, common, penniless lout" (as her father, the Baron von Richthofen, called Lawrence) or crawling back to the respectable husband she didn't love. Frieda let Weekley initiate divorce proceedings. "The promise of life with you is all richness," Lawrence had written her on a postcard. But exile and poverty also followed, in a highly Lawrentian confirmation of the loneliness of fulfillment.

Before long, the couple was living in Italy; few households would receive them in England, and their scarce British pounds went farther there than at home. Lawrence mailed perhaps the greatest of his letters from the little villa off Lake Garda. In one of them he declares:

> The real way of living is to answer to one's wants. Not "I want to light up with my intelligence as many things as possible" but "For the living of my full flame—I want that liberty, I want that woman, I want that pound of peaches, I want to go to sleep, I want to go to the pub and have a good time, I want to look abeastly swell today, I want to kiss that girl, I want to insult that man." Instead of that...we talk about some sort of ideas. I'm like Carlyle, who, they say, wrote 50 volumes on the value of silence.

Everything is here; in half a paragraph Lawrence comprehends his life. There is the sense, gained from Frieda, of having no obligations but to desire; the virtually pre-Socratic tendency to see all life as a species of flame (in Lawrence, to be alive is always described as being on fire); the tone simultaneously of great casualness and authority; the pleasure taken in vituperation ("I want to insult that man"); and, of course, the awareness that to marshal all one's eloquence, education, and discipline in defense of mute, dark, instinctual life is a crowning paradox, like Carlyle with his fifty volumes on silence.

In Lawrence's exhortations we also hear an overwhelming wish to convince himself—for the triumph of having won Frieda might easily have been taken for a disaster. The couple returned to England and were married in a London registry office in July, 1914, with only two friends in attendance. In disgrace with fortune and men's eyes, the Lawrences had also begun to quarrel in their notorious apocalyptic style. Later, both portrayed this gruelling habit as a reflection of their general honesty, but at first many of the fights had a common source: Frieda in her divorce had lost the right of access to her children. Her grief turned to anger, as did Lawrence's resentment of her grief. And when the war arrived it only compounded the couple's furious isolation. Frieda, after all, was German, and in the censorious wartime climate Lawrence's next and greatest novels, "The Rainbow" and "Women in Love," would become unpublishable.

From a distance, Lawrence appears an ideal type of the modern artist, perpetrating high-minded outrages on the public in defiance of sales or reputation, and the image is not inaccurate. But he didn't choose to be the kind of writer he was; it wasn't as if Lawrence, with a wife to support and no patron, didn't *want* to sell out. In 1913, he wrote to Garnett:

> I'm a damned curse unto myself. I've written rather more than half of a most fascinating (to me) novel. But nobody will ever dare to publish it....Yet I love and adore this

> new book....So new, so really a stratum deeper than anybody has ever gone, in a novel...quite unlike *Sons and Lovers*, not a bit visualized.

For a long time, people assumed this letter must concern "The Rainbow," since it so clearly anticipates the troubles and achievement of that book. In fact, Lawrence was talking about another novel (seven years later to become "The Lost Girl"), which he abandoned in order to write something more salably conventional in style and morality. The joke, played by now on several generations of bored British schoolchildren, is that when Lawrence sat down to write a page-turner he stood up two years later with "The Rainbow."

It was a corroboration of his doctrine: he wrote according to his desires, not his intentions. In "Sons and Lovers," Paul Morel is a painter, and among the book's glories are its gleaming visual descriptions. But Lawrence had come to think of the eye as an organ of distance and calculation. In "The Rainbow," he trades in his great visual powers for a deliberately blind and fumbling account of the bodily lives of men and women. We hardly see the three generations of the Brangwens except in the glowing patterns of their heat, as if the Technicolor of "Sons and Lovers" had given way to infrared:

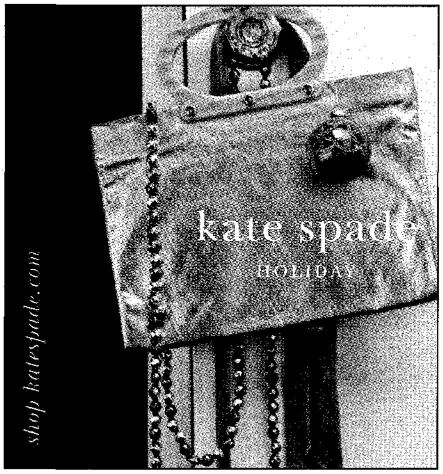
> In his breast, or in his bowels, somewhere in his body, there had started another activity. It was as if a strong light were burning there, and he was blind within it, unable to know anything, except that this transfiguration burned between him and her, connecting them, like a secret power.

Lawrence later scandalized his contemporaries by insisting in "Lady Chatterley's Lover" on "fuck" and "cunt"; nowadays he embarrasses us with his "bowels" and "wombs." But the old-fashioned terms shouldn't hide from us the modern breakthrough: this was indeed a stratum deeper. Lawrence's formal accomplishment, less obvious at a glance than Joyce's or Woolf's, is to narrate beneath the stream of consciousness, and chart subterranean currents of feeling as they shift and swell. These vast impersonal tides swamp what he called "the old stable ego of the character," flowing from and returning to life at large.

What got him in trouble wasn't that he composed the would-be potboiler in the blindfolded exaltation of his new style; it was that he'd included scenes of rapturous nudity, a lesbian relationship, and some withering remarks about nationalism. Soon after "The Rainbow" 's publication, in 1915, a magistrate declared the book "utter filth," and ordered all copies destroyed under the Obscene Publications Act. A year later, no publisher would risk the same reaction with "Women in Love." (The novel didn't appear in Britain until 1920.)

In addition to depriving him of his best chance at a livelihood, the British government relocated Lawrence and Frieda from Cornwall, where it was suspected, absurdly, that they might be in communication with German submarines. Moving from one bare London apartment to the next, in poor health, and living on borrowed funds, Lawrence became, in his words, "a walking phenomenon of suspended fury"; he was determined to quit his homeland as soon as he could. When at last the war ended, he fell ill in the global flu epidemic and once again nearly died. Upon his recovery, he and Frieda made plans to sail to the Continent, and after 1919 they never lived in England again.

The long volume on "the early years" that Worthen contributed to the Cambridge biography is a remarkable book, at once "slow, like growth," as Lawrence said of "Sons and Lovers," and enthralling. In this new book, Worthen seems to rush where he would prefer to linger, and it may be that the professor emeritus of D. H. Lawrence Studies is too familiar with his material to capture the excitement that Lawrence sparked in his contemporaries. The impression of Lawrence as a fox let loose in a drawing room, and then trotting off into the wilderness, is probably best conveyed at a readable length by Philip Callow's two short books on Lawrence, "Son and Lover" and "Body of Truth."



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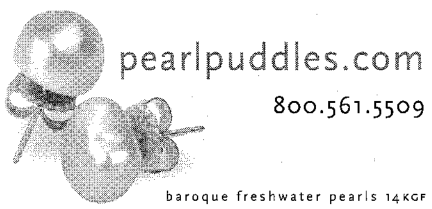
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Still, Worthen's single-volume life has the merit of pursuing a theme detectable in every phase of Lawrence's life: his perpetually renewed isolation.

It is perhaps no surprise that a frail artistic boy should feel a stranger in a coal-mining village, or that his working-class origins should in turn mark him off from wellborn Londoners "tampering," as Lawrence wrote, "with the arts, literature, painting, sculpture, music." And we almost expect the daring modern artist to run afoul of censors and expatriate himself. What's more remarkable in a writer best known for his erotic rhapsodies and thought of as "a priest of love"—as he pronounced himself after meeting Frieda—is that he should repudiate both love and intimacy. But this is just what Lawrence did, even as Frieda's presence became the only constant in his wandering life.

In Lawrence's last decade, he and Frieda moved from Taormina, Sicily, to Thirroul, Australia, to Taos, New Mexico, and, finally, after several other stops, to Vence, France, where there was a tuberculosis sanatorium. It's a challenge to the reader of any Lawrence biography simply to keep track of his address through these years. Much easier to chart is Lawrence's pursuit of an ideal of life in which there would be no idealism at all: no Christianized love making a virtue of self-sacrifice, no illusion that lovers, because they share words, can also share experiences. Lawrence's philosophy becomes a kind of rapt literalism, as his ethic becomes a coldly joyous solitude: the world is only the separate bodies in it. Here is the author of "Sons and Lovers" and "Women in Love" insisting, in a 1922 essay, on the crucial "thing to do":

> And it's more difficult than poison-gas. It is to leave off loving. . . . Wives, don't love your husbands any more: even if they cry for it, the great babies! . . . Just boil the eggs and fill the salt-cellars and be quite nice, and in your own soul be alone and be still. . . . Husbands, don't love your wives any more. If they flirt with men younger or older than yourselves, let your blood not stir. . . . And learn, learn, learn the one and only lesson worth learning at last. Learn to walk in the sweetness of the possession of your own soul.

By the nineteen-twenties, Lawrence wants his writing to indicate, and his readers to embrace, the animal aloneness that human language only *seems* to overcome; bodies may come into contact, but not souls. His late poems are especially eloquent in their envy of lizards, mountain lions, and mating whales.

Lawrence's developed creed was a kind of paganism, and in the new worlds of Australia and America, as well as among Mexican Indians and the tombs of the vanished Etruscans, Lawrence went looking for some intimation of a new or old civilization, livelier, healthier, more generous and spontaneous than the one he knew. But he had to drag the same dwindling frame with him wherever he went, and in the end he seems perhaps as tired of himself, "a stray individual with not much health and not much money," as of Western civilization. He claims that the Etruscan ruins "leave the breast breathing freely and pleasantly, with a certain fulness of life"—and you think of how little of his lungs Lawrence had left to breathe with when he wrote those words, in 1927.

Dying of tuberculosis in the winter of 1929-30, unable to walk, and rendered sexually impotent by his disease, he wrote these words on the last page of his last book:

> Man wants his physical fulfilment first and foremost, since now, once and once only, he is in the flesh and potent. For man, the vast marvel is to be alive. For man, as for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive. . . . The dead may look after the afterwards. But the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh is ours, and ours alone, and ours only for a time. We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh, and part of the living, incarnate cosmos.

He died on March 2, 1930, aged forty-four and weighing all of eighty-five pounds, in Vence, where Frieda, Aldous and Maria Huxley, and some others buried him, Frieda wrote, "very simply, like a bird."

Now that the eighties and nineties fashion of censoriously political reading has come to seem a narrow cut, and nearly as dated as those postwar clichés about the sickness of civilized humanity, Lawrence can be rescued from both the moralists and the Lawrentians. No doubt his vitalism was a sick man's dream of health, and the sickness sometimes corrupts the dream with misanthropy, misogyny, and self-despair. But it would take a robust human animal indeed not to suspect, reading Lawrence, the unused possibility of a quicker, deeper life just beneath the one we live, and not to feel, reading about the man, that he sometimes knew whereof he spoke. ◆

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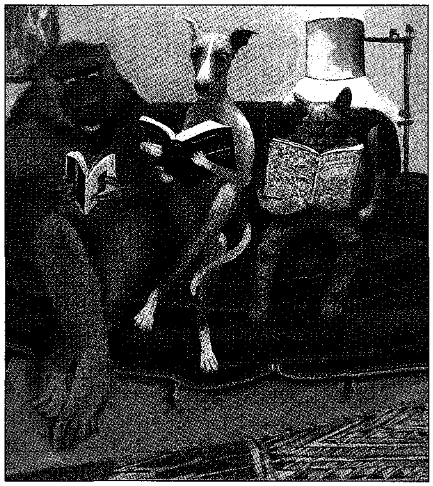

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THE THEATRE

WEASEL WORDS

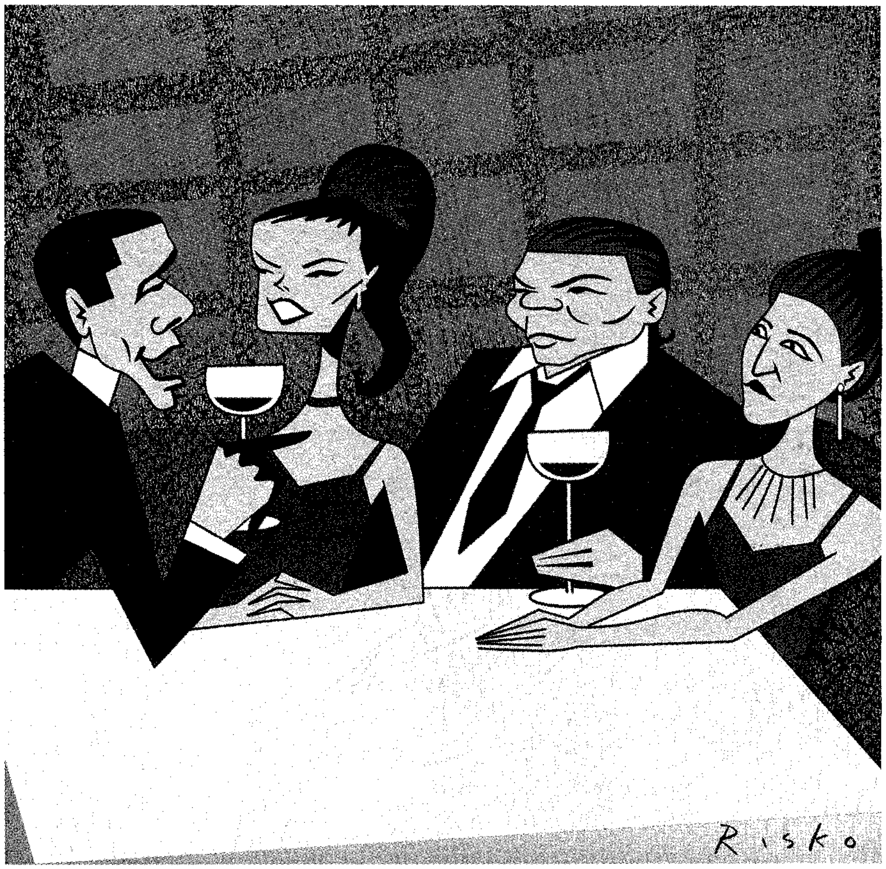
Self-deception in Pinter and O'Neill.

BY JOHN LAHR

"The world is full of fictional characters looking for their stories," the photographer Diane Arbus wrote. Her words came back to me as I watched the drama of identity taking shape in a fascinating Harold Pinter double bill (well directed by Neil Pepe, at the Atlantic Theatre Company), which brings together his first play, "The Room" (1957), and "Celebration" (1999). The winner of this year's Nobel Prize in Literature, Pinter, as a playwright, a screenwriter, a director, and a mentor, has had an enormous influence on the theatrical landscape of his time. He began his career as an actor, and, even at the outset, with comparatively crude command, he turned his actor's understanding of subtext into a metaphysic. "The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear," he said. "It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen which keeps the other in its place." He added, "One way of looking at speech is to say it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness."

Pinter claims to know only so much about his characters, who arrive as images from his unconscious; his ignorance of their history is matched by the characters' own vagueness about themselves. "The Room," for instance, opens with a woman called Rose (Mary Beth Peil) padding around a bed-sitter, serving tea to a resolutely unresponsive man named Bert (Thomas Jay Ryan). "It's very cold out, I can tell you," Rose announces. "It's murder." Later, she adds, "This is a good room. You've got a chance in a place like this. I look after you, don't I, Bert?" Bert doesn't answer. Who are these people? Where do they come from? What do they really want? Is what they say true? Every person who subsequently crosses the threshold calls into question Rose's domestic daydreams about the room and about herself. In this surreal nightmare, things feel real and turn out to be otherwise. When a blind black man, Riley (the excellent Earle Hyman), arrives unexpectedly, we discover that Rose also answers to the name Sal, though whether or not she and Riley have had a relationship remains unclear. At the finale, Bert kicks Riley senseless. "Can't see," Rose says, clutching her eyes. "I can't see." Her blindness plays both as a response to the weight of the unknown and as a refusal to know. In this jejune and portentous one-act, Pinter stumbled on a psychological truth that he continued to explore brilliantly for half a century: mankind's passion for ignorance.

Blindness, as Pinter has dramatized it over the years, is something internal. The habit of not seeing is for his characters a sort of narrative device, an evasion of self-awareness that allows them to sustain their stories of themselves; the very syntax of their speech carries them ever farther from a real understanding of their own emotions. "Celebration," which takes place at two adjacent banquettes of an elegant restaurant, makes the point with hilarious panache. Here language is the main character, used in deft counterpoint to the unmooring silence at the heart of each speaker. With mockery, weasel words, tall tales, the syncopation of repetition, and, of course, a carapace of pauses, the characters perform a sensational exercise in denial.



Language is the main character in Harold Pinter's "Celebration."

At one table, a smarmy banker, Russell (the droll Brennan Brown), and Suki (Kate Blumberg), his eager but long-in-the-tooth companion, buttress their emptiness with the slap and tickle of seductive swagger:

> RUSSELL: All right. Tell me. Do you think I have a nice character? . . .
>
> SUKI: Yes, the thing is you haven't really got any character at all, have you? As such. Au fond. But I wouldn't worry about it. . . . I don't have any character either. I'm just a

reed. I'm just a reed in the wind. Aren't I? You know I am. I'm just a reed in the wind.
RUSSELL: You're a whore.
SUKI: A whore in the wind.

At the other table, an East End wide boy, Lambert (the superb Patrick Breen), and his wife, Julie (Betsy Aidem), are loudly celebrating their toxic marriage, with Julie's sister, Prue (Carolyn McCormick), and her husband, Matt (Thomas Jay Ryan), who is Lambert's brother. Pinter has great fun playing the unwitting testimony of his characters' inner turbulence—the rawness of their aggression and their longing—against the cool chic of the surroundings. When the talk gets around to kids, Matt's bitterness seeps into his bravado. "Children," he says. "They have no memory. They remember nothing. They don't remember who their father was or who their mother was. It's all a hole in the wall for them." He is interrupted by the maîtresse d', Sonia (Christa Scott-Reed), who comes to the table. "Everything all right?" she asks. "Perfect," Julie says. The slinky Sonia seems to have more on her mind than working the room, as she brags to the table about the restaurant's international clientele. "I've often said, 'You don't have to speak English to enjoy good food,'" she says. "Or even understand English." She goes on, "It's like sex isn't it? . . . You don't have to speak English to enjoy sex. Lots of people enjoy sex without being English."

All the put-ons and put-downs here form an undertow of profound defensiveness, which is personified by the stately waiter (David Pittu), who politely but authoritatively interjects himself into the conversation at each table, in order to explain his delusional pedigree. "I thought you'd be interested to know that my grandfather knew T. S. Eliot quite well," he tells one group. "He was James Joyce's godmother." To the other table, he claims a connection to "the old Hollywood film stars"; his grandfather, he says, "was one of the very few native-born Englishmen to have had it off with Hedy Lamarr." The waiter is an inspired creation, a transparently false self. His litany of connection makes us feel the humiliation of his disconnection: cut off from history, from purpose, from even an iota of authenticity. "My grandfather introduced me to the mystery of life and I'm still in the middle of it," he tells us, as he stands alone in the restaurant after the guests have left. "I can't find the door to get out. My grandfather got out of it. He got right out of it. . . . He got that absolutely right." As the lights fade, he adds, "And I'd like to make one further interjection." But he says nothing. The silence—the force that compels all of Pinter's manic motormouths—is huge, terrifying, and, in Pinter's masterly hands, visionary.

The same can't be said for Eugene O'Neill's "A Touch of the Poet" (a Roundabout production, at Studio 54, under the direction of Doug Hughes), which also attempts to cover the territory of self-delusion. Here, the braggadocio of the well-nicknamed Con Melody (the admirable Gabriel Byrne)—an Irishman once commended for his bravery by the Duke of Wellington, who clings to his aristocratic posture, even though he is the hapless owner of a dingy tavern outside Boston—nearly destroys his household. Set in 1828 and written in 1936, the year O'Neill himself won the Nobel Prize, the play anticipates the pipe dreams of "The Iceman Cometh" and the parental feuds of "Long Day's Journey Into Night"; it was the only completed work in a projected eleven-play cycle.

But, despite the vivid portrait of Melody's vainglory, the play, it seems to me, is overwrought and overwritten. Its two main events—the affair between Melody's contemptuous daughter, Sara (Emily Bergl), and a young poet who is in residence at the inn, and the murder of Con's beloved horse—happen offstage. Despite fine support from Dearbhla Molloy as Con's long-suffering wife and Byron Jennings as his boozy sidekick, the play hardly ever comes alive. Santo Loquasto's monumental set, which is more the size of a castle than of a cramped provincial inn, dissipates the play's energy, which, in any case, is short-circuited by O'Neill's clunky cadences. O'Neill is not in command of either dramaturgy or psychology here; he can describe Con's self-delusion, but he can't penetrate it. As a result, the play feels more willed than inspired, and we're left, at the finale, with a bogus redemption. Pride and repentance blur into one. To a man with only a hammer, I guess, everything is a nail. ♦

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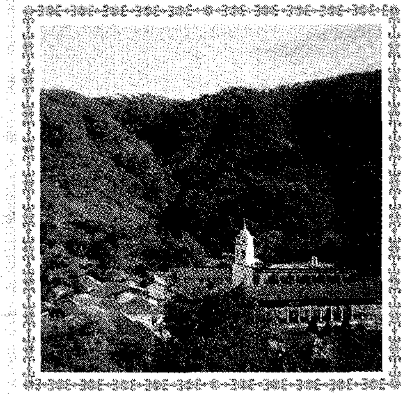

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POP MUSIC

QUÉ CALIENTE

A Latin genre gets bigger.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Sales of Latin music rose twelve per cent over the past year—the only pop category to experience an uptick. Latin music, the industry term for Spanish-language records, owes much of its commercial vitality to three very different phenomena: RBD, a Mexican pop group whose members are actors on a popular soap opera; Shakira, a twenty-eight-year-old Colombian-Lebanese singer, who released albums in English and in Spanish this year and who performs in so many different styles that she is practically her own musical category; and, especially, *reggaetón*, the first genre in Spanish to become part of mainstream pop.

The Puerto Rican reggaetón artist Ivy Queen.

Reggaetón consists of rapping in Spanish over rhythms derived from Jamaican dancehall and salsa. These styles have existed for years, but until the nineties, when Puerto Rican artists began putting them together, Spanish rapping sounded like a stepchild of American hip-hop. *Reggaetón* turned the beat around. Rather than stressing the first pulse in every measure, the music accents offbeats, and the difference is evident on the dance floor: *reggaetón* speaks to hips, hip-hop to heads and shoulders. The music's syncopated movement suits the hard phonemes and quick cadences of Puerto Rican Spanish; the best *reggaetón* vocalists create long, complex musical patterns that are often more sophisticated than those of American rappers.

Hispanics, who two years ago overtook African-Americans as the largest minority group in the United States, may be the music's primary consumers, but this year *reggaetón* songs have begun to be played on pop radio, as well as on stations like Latino 96.3, in Los Angeles, which has adopted the Hispanic urban format, "hurban"—a mix of *reggaetón* and hip-hop. Hollywood has also discovered *reggaetón;* several films about the music are currently in development, including one funded by Jennifer Lopez's company, Nuyorican Productions.

The genre's most successful artist is Daddy Yankee, a twenty-eight-year-old Puerto Rican who, according to Nielsen SoundScan, has sold nearly a million copies of his 2004 album "Barrio Fino," mostly on the strength of a song called "Gasolina." Produced by Luny Tunes, two young Dominican men now based in Puerto Rico who are the genre's current trendsetters, "Gasolina" begins with spastic keyboard tittering, like an electrical circuit sputtering to life, followed by a crescendo of hammering drums—a common *reggaetón* motif. Then, as the beat and a meagre digital melody kick in, Yankee raps bluntly about a girl whose idea of fun includes turning on car engines. The chorus consists of a teasing call and response: Yankee chants, "*A ella le gusta la gasolina*" ("She loves gasoline"), to which a docile female chorus replies, "*Dame mas gasolina!*" ("Give me more gasoline!") *Gasolina* has been variously translated as "speed," "rum," "sperm," and, of course, "gas." The song is quintessential *reggaetón:* it hits the offbeat snares hard, and piles on sexual innuendo with manic energy.

Luny Tunes also produced "Pa'l Mundo," a new album by Wisin & Yandel, a pair of young Puerto Rican musicians who are among the genre's most accomplished. Wisin & Yandel tinker with *reggaetón's* formula, interjecting references to dancehall numbers and to the genre's Latin antecedents. A founding influence was the Panamanian artist El General, who scored a novelty hit in 1991 with "Muévelo" ("Move It"), an infectious song that combined Spanish vocals with dancehall's distinctively syncopated snare-drum pattern. El General's music was called "*reggae en español*," to distinguish it from Latin hip-hop, and in the mid-nineties, using a rhythm called Dem Bow, created by the Jamaican producer Bobby Digital, Puerto Rican rappers started rhyming in Spanish over dancehall, adding Puerto Rican slang and Latin percussion to the Jamaican template.

As a genre, *reggaetón* is where hip-hop was twenty-five years ago, slowly making the transition from dance singles and d.j.s to hit songs and stars. Like dozens of *reggaetón* numbers, Wisin & Yandel's single "Rakata" is addictive yet ultimately unsatisfying. The lyrics are aggressively sexual, and the title, which is the song's leitmotif, is a nonsense word that evokes both gunfire and coitus, and meshes nicely with a series of drum accents that run beneath the vocals. But the track lacks the tension and the narrative arc of a good pop song, and the m.c.s' voices are undistinguished. As was the case with hip-hop in the nineteen-eighties, the best way to experience *reggaetón* is on compilation albums—such as the successful series "Mas Flow"—or in live performance.

For the past three years, New York's leading Latin station, Mega 97.9 FM, has sponsored an annual event called Megaton, and this year the show was held on Thanksgiving at Madison Square Garden. Two of the station's d.j.s, Alex Sensation and Johnny Famolari, repeatedly thanked the event's sponsors, Cingular Wireless, McDonald's, and Bud Light—one of the few times that English was spoken onstage. Because all the acts used backing tracks or records, there were no instruments to assemble or break down, and the sets—each only three or four songs long—succeeded one another quickly, before similarities between them became obvious.

Wisin & Yandel did not appear as scheduled, but the genre has no shortage of male duos. Alexis & Fido, whose nickname is Los Pitbulls, because of the musicians' tendency to bark during songs, put on an invigorating performance. One of their most popular songs is "El Tiburón" ("The Shark"), which starts with the two-chord theme from "Jaws," and whose chorus, like that of "Gasolina," relies on goofy double-entendre: "Mama, what do you want? / To be taken away by the shark!" "El Tiburón" was produced by Luny Tunes and exemplifies the musicians' penchant for pairing loud, simple beats with high, needling sounds and letting rappers fill in the sonic space between, trading lines with one another and the background singers. The effect is appealingly social; *reggaetón* songs seem to emerge from a room full of people.

Tego Calderon was one of the few performers to appear without backup dancers, and one of the few men onstage who had made an effort to look dapper. He strolled around in a blue sweater and a newsboy cap, and rapped in a low and craggy voice over both traditional hip-hop beats and snatches of salsa, which makes his palette currently the broadest in *reggaetón*. But the evening's most memorable performance was by Ivy Queen, one of two female acts. Now in her early thirties, Ivy Queen is a Puerto Rican who spent her childhood in New York City, which may account for the tumultuous applause she received when she took the stage. Wearing a tight T-shirt, blue-jeans, and knee-high leather boots, she exhibited a well-honed sense of theatre. She knew when to stand still, leading the crowd regally through a recitation of her name ("*Como me llama yo?*" "Ivy Queen!"), and when to crouch and start dancing. Ivy Queen has recorded a song about spousal abuse, but at Megaton she stuck to party anthems, singing over dancehall numbers made famous by Sean Paul and Lumidee. She has a deep voice and an impressive facility with fast polyrhythms, but her recordings lack the confidence and novelty of Luny Tunes productions.

Daddy Yankee, who closed the show, is a dogged performer, often pushing his unremarkable voice to the breaking point when he can't think of anything better to do. His song "Rompe" ("Break It Down") is currently No. 1 on *Billboard's* Latin chart and could become *reggaetón's* second mainstream hit. The song reduces *reggaetón's* already simple forms to an insistent four-note phrase. The rhythm track is synchronized with the word *rompe*, which is repeated three times, with less syncopation than in most *reggaetón* songs but with as much enthusiasm. As the audience happily chanted along with Yankee, the women in the crowd executed subtle variations on a circular dance move that could be described as "butt in orbit." The two words that consistently elicited the loudest response, however, had little to do with music: "Puerto Rico!" ◆

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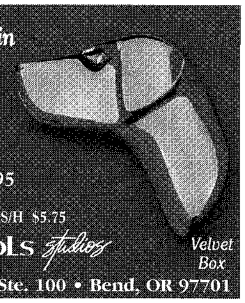

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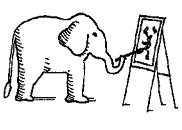

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THE SKY LINE

TRIANGULATION

Norman Foster's thrilling addition to midtown Manhattan.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

Norman Foster is the Mozart of modernism. He is nimble and prolific, and his buildings are marked by lightness and grace. He works very hard, but his designs don't show the effort. He brings an air of unnerving aplomb to everything he creates—from skyscrapers to airports, research laboratories to art galleries, chairs to doorknobs. His ability to produce surprising work that doesn't feel labored must drive his competitors crazy.

Foster, who is English and lives in London, is an artist with the savvy of a corporate consultant. He knows how to convince chief executives that the avant-garde is in their interest. In the nineteen-eighties, he persuaded H.S.B.C., the international bank, to spend nearly a billion dollars to build a tower in Hong Kong; the novel structure, in which five enormous steel modules were stacked on top of one another, was the most innovative skyscraper since the Seagram Building. In 2000, he secured a commission from the Hearst Corporation, the publishing firm, to design its new headquarters, in Manhattan. The gorgeous, gemlike tower, which will officially open in a few months, is Foster's first big project in America.

In the nineteen-twenties, William Randolph Hearst commissioned Joseph Urban to design his company's first headquarters: six stories of megalomaniacal pomp on Eighth Avenue between Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh Streets. Despite its low height, everything about the yellowish stone structure suggests grandiosity, especially the monumental fluted columns that stretch higher than the building itself, giving it the look of a base for a much taller structure. (Hearst and Urban had planned to add a tower, but they never did.) The Hearst Corporation long ago outgrew this zany palazzo, dispatching most of its employees to rented space nearby. When the company decided to gather its operations under one roof, its executives smartly concluded that Urban's building was too much fun to give up. Hearst hired Foster to build something on top of it, and in October, 2001, he unveiled a scheme to add forty stories to the original headquarters. It was the first major construction project to be announced in New York after September 11th.

As with all Foster designs, the Hearst tower is sleek, refined, and filled with new technology. It looks nothing like the Jazz Age confection on which it sits. The addition is sheathed in glass and stainless steel—a shiny missile shooting out of Urban's stone launching pad. The tower's most prominent feature is the brash geometric pattern of its glass and steel, which the architect calls a "diagrid": a diagonal grid of supporting trusses, covering the façade with a series of four-story-high triangles. These make up much of the building's supporting structure, and they do it with impressive economy: the pattern uses twenty per cent less steel than a conventional skyscraper frame would require.

Foster's brilliance can be seen in the way that he exploits this engineering trick for aesthetic pleasure. The triangles are the playful opposites of the dark Xs that slash the façade of the John Hancock Center, in Chicago. They give the building a jubilantly jagged shape. Foster started with a box, then sliced off the corners and ran triangles up and down the sides, pulling them in and out—a gargantuan exercise in nip and tuck. The result resembles a many-faceted diamond. The corners of the shaft slant in and out as the tower rises, and the whole form shimmers.

Such a scheme could have become a pretentious exercise in structural exhibitionism, but in Foster's hands it presents the perfect foil for Urban's building. The design avoids the two most obvious approaches: imitating the style of the base or erecting a neutral glass box. Joseph Urban's goal in the original Hearst Building was to create a respectable form of

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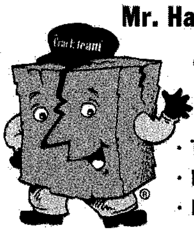

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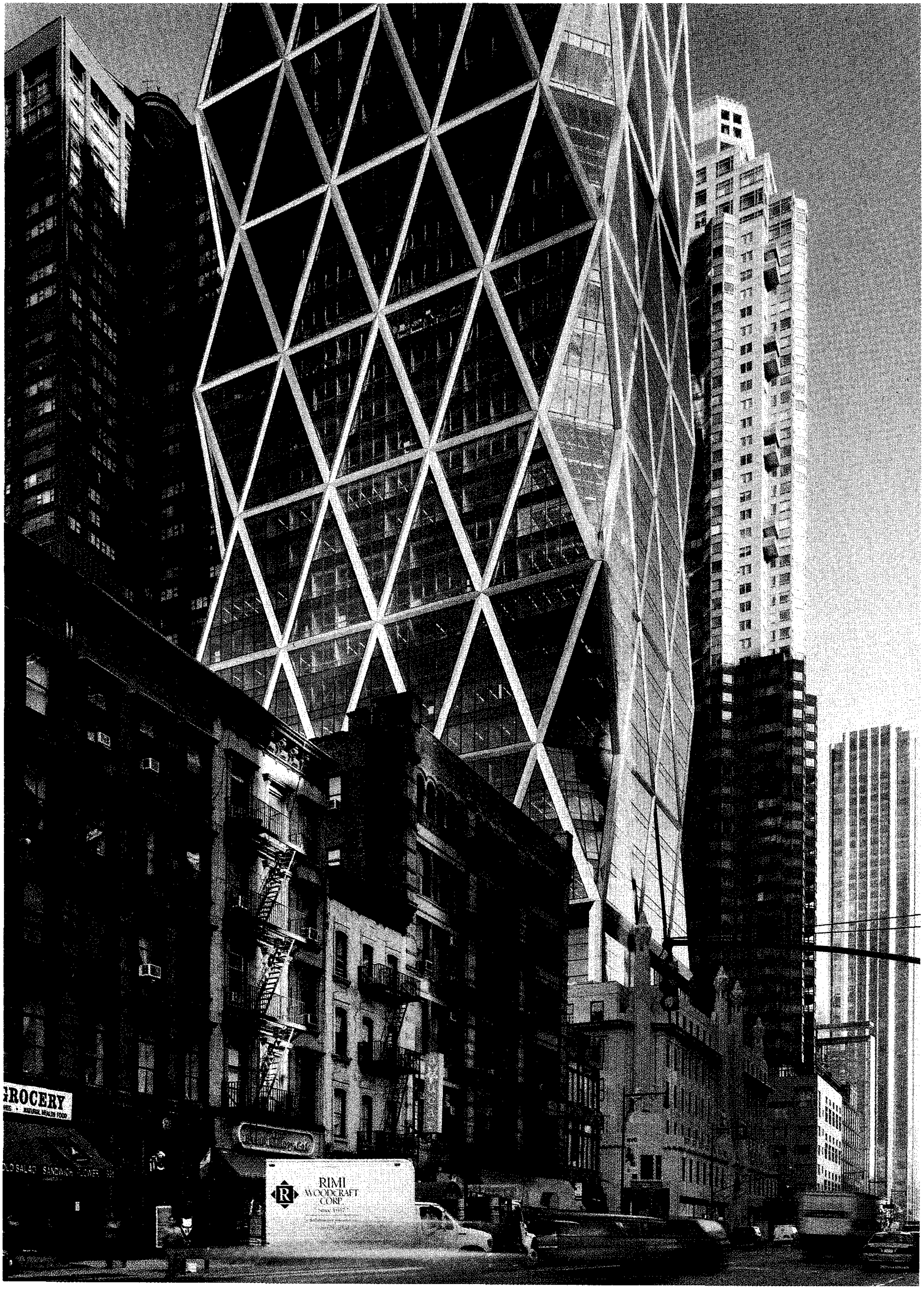
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Foster's addition to the Hearst Building is a shiny missile shooting out of a stone launching pad. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

flamboyance, and Foster has figured out how to do the same thing with his tower, but in unquestionably modern terms, and without compromising his commitment to structural innovation. Foster is at his best when solving puzzles like this one; unlike most élite architects, he isn't obsessed with creating his own pure forms. His gift for building a meaningful conversation between new and old architecture became apparent six years ago, with the unveiling of the renovated Reichstag, in Berlin: Foster placed a glass dome atop an ornate nineteenth-century masonry structure, reinterpreting the building's monumentality in modernist terms. And, in 2000, he enlivened the courtyard of the British Museum with a steel-and-glass canopy that casts a delicate geometric shadow on the floor.

In some ways, the Hearst tower calls to mind a famous unbuilt design from a heyday of modernism: a six-hundred-foot skyscraper in Philadelphia, proposed by Louis Kahn and Anne Tyng in 1957, which would have had a zigzag shape based on a framework of triangular supports. Kahn and Tyng weren't the only designers to have understood that the triangle is an inherently strong and efficient structural form; Buckminster Fuller and the engineer Robert Le Ricolais made the same claim. Foster's use of triangles is, in this sense, a borrowed notion. But most of the older schemes had the visual appeal of something made with an Erector set. Foster took the ideas, updated them, and produced not just a real building but an exceptionally elegant one.

Indeed, the Hearst tower is the most beautiful skyscraper to go up in New York since 1967, when Skidmore, Owings & Merrill completed the stunningly serene 140 Broadway, in lower Manhattan. After all the inchoate, collagelike skyscrapers that have been built around Times Square in the past decade, it's refreshing to see a tall building that clearly emerges from rational thought. Yet the Hearst tower also has a jauntiness that most modern buildings lack. The venerable modernist tradition of allowing a building's structure to determine its form has often led to pious, heavy-handed architecture. If you believe that there is something noble about a building expressing its structure, you will like the Hearst tower. But if you believe that it is more important for buildings to energize the skyline, you will like the Hearst tower every bit as much.

The pleasure of the Hearst tower doesn't end with the exterior. It has one of the most dramatic entrances of any tower in New York. You go in through Urban's original arch—which, along with the rest of the base's exterior, has been meticulously restored—and up a set of escalators. What comes next is an explosive surprise such as has not been seen in the city since Frank Lloyd Wright led people through a low, tight lobby into the rotunda of the Guggenheim. The escalators deposit you in a vast atrium that contains the upper floors of the old Urban building, which Foster has carved out and roofed over with glass. The inside walls of the old building have been covered with stucco, and you look up at three stories of windows—something one rarely sees, except perhaps in a cathedral—which give the space the feel of an outdoor piazza.

Hearst employees will be able to eat in a café within the atrium, and so will be on a par with their rivals at the Condé Nast Building, in Times Square, which features a sensuous Frank Gehry-designed cafeteria. But the Hearst space isn't just chic; it's majestic. The atrium is enhanced by huge, diagonal structural supports for the tower, which slice down into it, and skylights offer thrilling views of the tower rising directly above.

Unfortunately, it isn't easy to see the Hearst Building in the cityscape. It is blocked on the west by a banal brick apartment building, on the north by another apartment tower and, beyond that, by the new Time Warner Center, at Columbus Circle, which looks all the more uninspired in comparison. This situation isn't much different from that of most iconic New York skyscrapers, which are visible only in pieces. (The Empire State Building is a happy exception.) But the partial sightings of the Hearst Building that are offered up and down Eighth Avenue or along Fifty-seventh Street are so enticing that they end up increasing its allure—like a flash of leg in a slit skirt. The best view comes from the Upper East Side, around the Metropolitan Museum, since nothing blocks the Hearst Building to the northeast. From the Met's roof, you can see the tower emerge in its full glory, rising over Central Park, at once fitting into New York's skyline and transforming it. ♦

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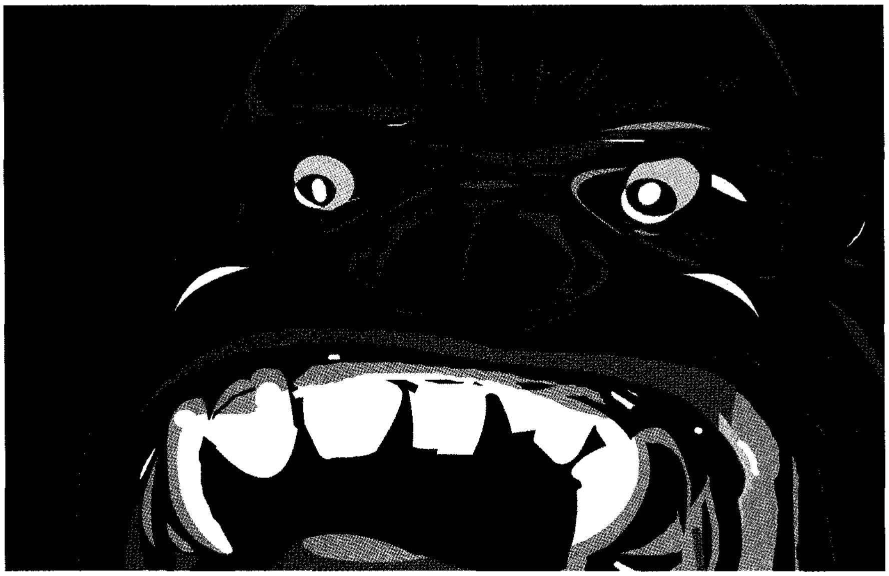
BEASTS AND BEAUTIES

"King Kong" and "Memoirs of a Geisha."

BY DAVID DENBY

The big guy is back: the same chocolate-doughnut nose, seriously mashed, as if he'd been sleeping face down in the jungle for decades; the matted hair, worn natural as always; the eyes both fierce and plaintive; the heavy-limbed body, though it's stronger than before, and quicker, too. He swings his weight easily, hanging from promontories and thick vines, but he's definitely a wrestler by temperament, taking on three allosaurs—or whatever they are—at once, and flinging them about as if they were barroom thugs. King Kong never really went away. The most familiar of pop-myth creatures, he just seemed, for some reason, to be hiding from us since his last appearance, in 1976, in which he found himself entrapped in a rather cheesy camp-colossal retelling, updated to the (then) present. That movie was a self-consciously jokey story about a greedy oil-company scouting expedition, a Princeton paleontologist (Jeff Bridges), and a ditzy starlet (Jessica Lange), who chatted to the ape as if he were hanging out in her dressing room. This new version, directed by Peter Jackson, goes back to the Depression era of the justly beloved 1933 original, which was directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack. The huckster-filmmaker Carl Denham (Jack Black) is again making a movie, and journeys by ship to a mysterious island in the South Seas, accompanied by a hungry, eager-to-perform vaudeville actress, Ann Darrow (Naomi Watts).



In Peter Jackson's movie, the ape is stronger, quicker, and digital.

ISTVAN BANYAI

This time, however, the hero is a playwright and screenwriter, played by the long-faced Adrien Brody. A knight of the doleful countenance if ever there was one, Brody is perhaps not quite right as a leading man; in any case, he receives less affection from Ann than the ape does. Once she overcomes her fright, she tries to enchant Kong by putting on a show before his jungle throne overlooking a vast valley. Watts, who has a likably game quality, does corny period vaudeville stuff—cartwheels, juggling, and slinky Egyptian moves—and her solitary auditor grunts and snorts and shifts his weight. Clearly, he is amused. She learns to trust

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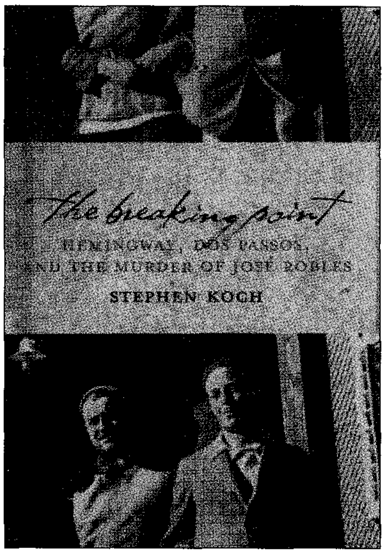

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COUNTERPOINT

him (he has gentle hands), and, back in New York, she doesn't want to give him up—she's left heartbroken atop the Empire State Building, where he meets his match and dies. The first two movies were about an ape who wanted a blonde he couldn't have, and the woman who came to like the big dope; Jackson's version is about an impossible union between partners equally in love with each other. But nothing can compare with the original's strange combination of naïve enthusiasm and knowing lewdness. (When Denham brought Kong and the girl back to New York, and exhibited them in a theatre, he claimed that she had "lived through an experience no other woman ever dreamed of.") There's no place for lewdness—for the jokes and innuendos that movie nuts have been buzzing over for decades—in this new, tender version.

I also missed any equivalent to the enchanted-isle graphics of the first movie. But there's no point, I suppose, in shrouding computer graphics in mist, since we're paying to see what we cannot see in life. Peter Jackson is a master of brilliantly colored fantasy. His Broadway at night, with square-backed yellow taxis and a thousand bulbs of light, is a slightly cartooned dream of thirties urban life; his jungle landscapes are treacherously lush. The trouble is that Jackson, an exuberant director, fresh from his triumph with the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, likes to shoot up a storm, and here his exuberance spills over into senselessness. The Depression background, just a few shots in the original, is stretched out here with a montage of shantytowns and strikes; the black "natives" on Skull Island—filthy, grotesque, and vicious—seem like escapees from a sideshow. Both shantytowns and "authentically" starving islanders now seem bizarrely beside the point in what is essentially a delirious pop fantasy. In the original, Kong defends his blonde against dinosaurs on Skull Island for just a couple of scenes, but here the fights go on forever. A herd of monsters panic and race down a narrow canyon, overtaking the ship's crew, who are running before them. Later, giant cockroaches and face-grabbing worms, and all sorts of other kiddie-show horrors, stop the movie cold. Repeating what Spielberg has already accomplished in the "Jurassic Park" series, Jackson has fallen into a trap. Spectacle must be more and more astonishing or it creates as much boredom as wonder, yet it's not easy, as filmmakers are finding out, to top what others have done and stay within a disciplined narrative; at any rate, our awareness that so little is staged in real space feeds our impatience. Even children may feel that they've seen it all before. This "Kong" is high-powered entertainment, but Jackson pushes too hard and loses momentum over the more than three hours of the movie. The story was always a goofy fable—that was its charm—and a well-told fable knows when to stop.

It may be as tricky to question another culture's ideals of beauty as it is to question its religion. If I now offer a demurral on the delicate subject of the geisha mystique, I hope it will be accepted merely as an expression of personal taste. A beautiful young woman whose breasts have been flattened, her face whitened and painted over with a mask, her body swathed in layers of padding and silk to the extent that she is unable to walk normally but must hobble as gracefully as she can—none of this, as enticements go, raises my pulse rate above its usual listless beat. But obviously the opposite was true for certain Japanese men. For worshippers of the geisha, the point of obsession was the precise balance between the erotic and the anti-erotic: the clothes may have disguised the outlines of the woman's body, but the neck, an area of major arousal for Japanese men, as the ankle was for Victorian Englishmen, had to be exposed. In general, a geisha's ambiguous situation was the source of her power. Even as she presented herself as supremely attractive, she remained out of reach to everyone but a single wealthy protector. Arthur Golden, in his 1997 best-seller, "Memoirs of a Geisha," worked pages of such lore into a fictionalized autobiography of a woman who triumphed in this extraordinary trade during the nineteen-thirties and forties. He opened a hidden world with fluency and grace. Yet somehow the movie that Rob Marshall has made from Golden's novel is a snooze. How did he and the screenwriter, Robin Swicord, let their subject get away from them? Whatever my uneasiness, women who serve as geisha have been at the center of many great Japanese films, including Kenji Mizoguchi's lyrical 1953 "Gion Bayashi."

There is spectacle enough in Marshall's movie—rows of geisha trainees aligned in formation like Rockettes, acres of low, cedar-and-bamboo buildings with mountains in the distance—but nothing that comes close to lyricism. What we're presented with, at first, is a kind of crude fairy tale, in which a country girl, Chiyo, is sold into bondage at a Kyoto geisha house in 1929. The house is ruled by a foul-tempered Mother (Kaori Momoi) and a nasty head geisha, Hatsumomo (Gong Li)—the equivalents of a wicked stepmother and stepsister. But then the teen-age Chiyo (Ziyi Zhang) is rescued by a fairy godmother, Mameha (Michelle Yeoh), an older geisha who treats her kindly and teaches her the intricacies of her craft. Golden told this tale from Chiyo's point of view, as memories of her early hardship and increasing mastery, but the movie, looking from the outside, presents the young Chiyo (Suzuka Ohgo) as a kind of exquisite punching bag and the teen-ager and the grownup woman as beautiful and tough-souled but opaque. It turns out that Marshall, the director of "Chicago" and numerous stage musicals, can't keep a narrative moving or create interest in any of his characters. We do not initially understand, for instance, why Hatsumomo is so cruel to Chiyo, and by the time we find out we no longer care. As Hatsumomo, Gong Li is required to throw so many hissy fits that she seems less a geisha than a Mean Girl in a high-school comedy set in Santa Barbara.

Chiyo, lips painted in a crimson circle, does attain a surpassing chic, but her paramount desire, which is to preserve her virginity for the highest bidder and then become the mistress of a handsome married gent (Ken Watanabe) who was once nice to her as a little girl, isn't very attractive psychologically, and provides little that we can root for. With the best will in the world, a Western audience could applaud Chiyo's submission to her married protector only with the most severe irony, and Marshall isn't capable of irony or of any other tonal variation on the literal. The movie lacks a sense of proportion: the filmmakers are so eager to pump up their subject that they don't let us know that by the nineteen-thirties geisha were in serious decline, and that their dress and their manners, derived from an aristocratic era when elegance might have served an organic function, had become little more than decorative adornment for industrialists and bankers making deals in teahouses—in other words, that many modern Japanese may have regarded them not as unspeakably mysterious and powerful but as an increasingly rarefied and even amusing anachronism. ♦

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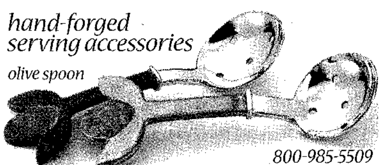

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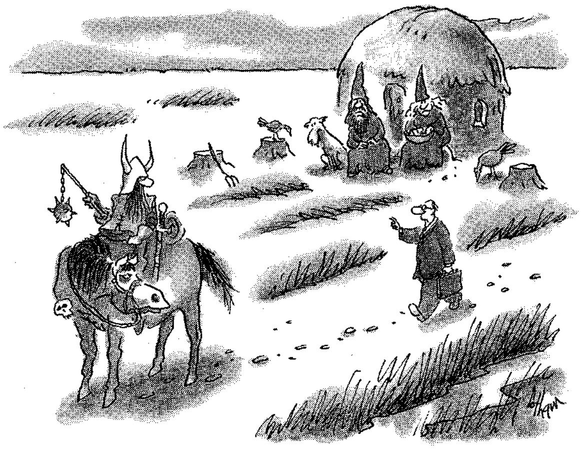
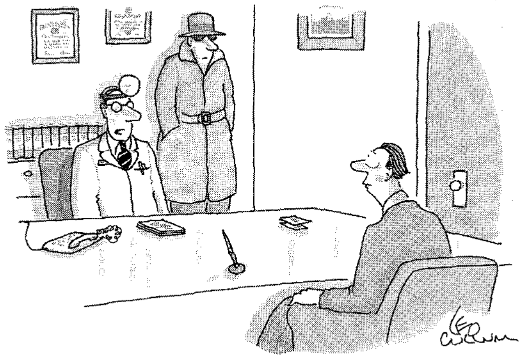
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, December 18th. Finalists in the December 5th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the January 9th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Dibs on the briefcase."
Andrew Wilson, Ayer, Mass.



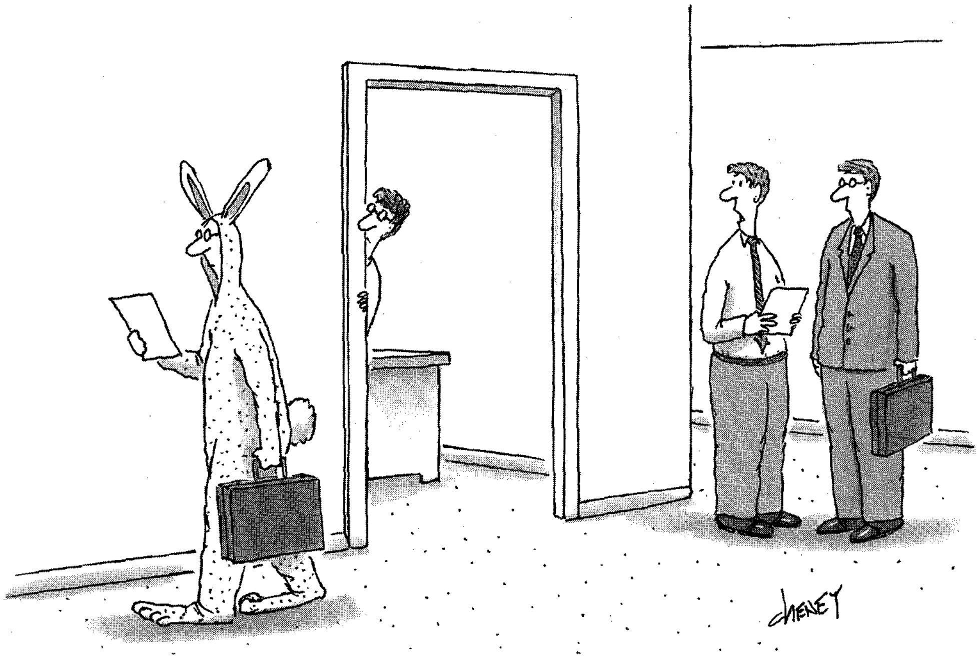
THE FINALISTS

"Good news! We have a solid lead on who stole your liver."
Tom Romig, Royal Oak, Mich.

"Instead of an expensive, invasive procedure, we've decided to beat it out of you."
Michael Lichter, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"That rash will need constant monitoring."
Aisling Dugan, Providence, R.I.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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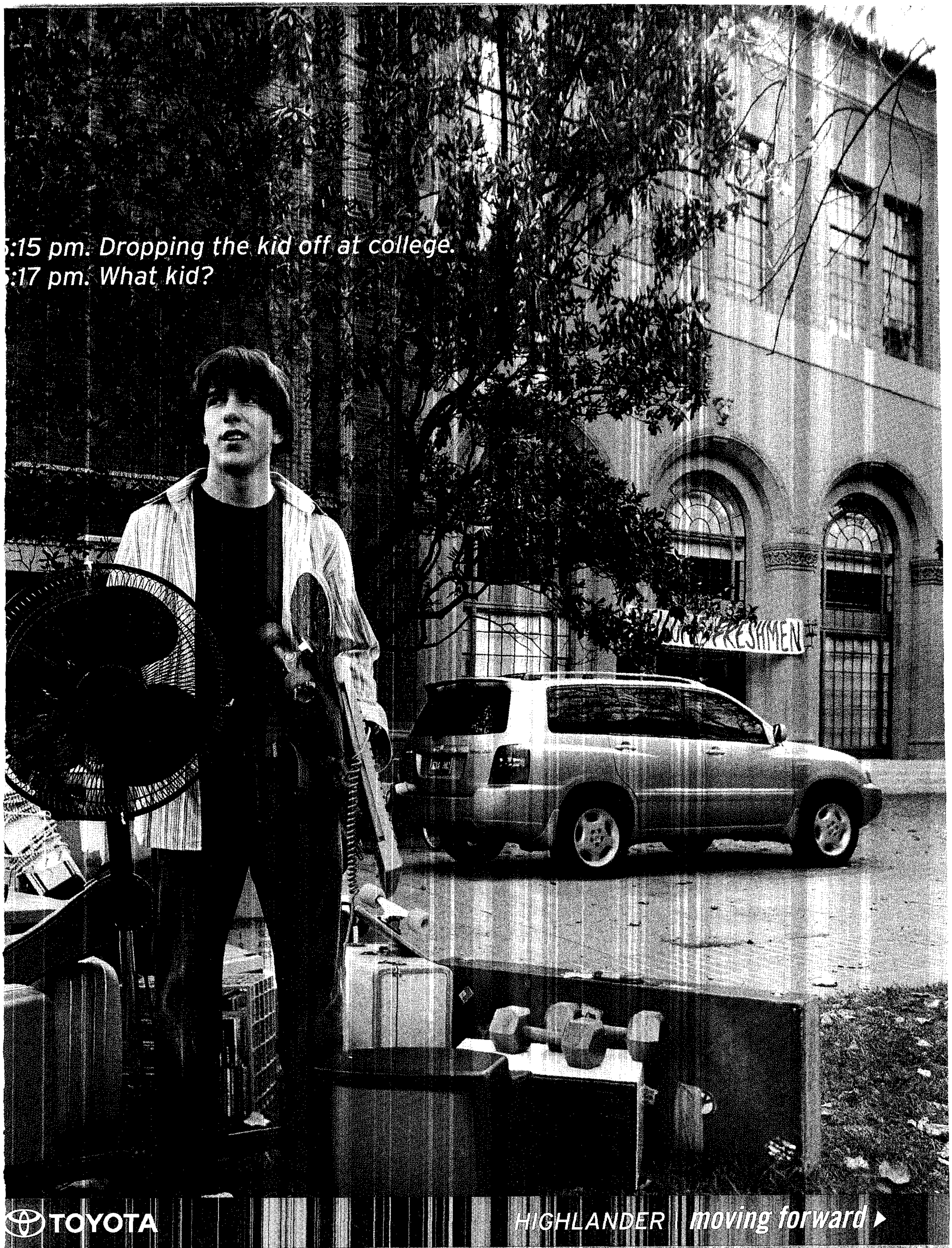
:15 pm. Dropping the kid off at college.
:17 pm. What kid?
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